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GABRIELLE;

OR,

PICTURES OF A REIGN.

VOL. II.

T. C. Newby, Printer, 65, Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square.

GABRIELLE;

OR,

PICTURES OF A REIGN.

A HISTORICAL NOVEL.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO,

AUTHOR OF

"A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES," "A PILGRIMAGE TO AUVERGNE," "THE QUEEN MOTHER," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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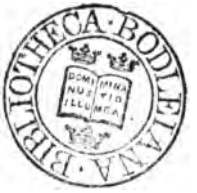
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GABRIELLE;

OR,

PICTURES OF A REIGN.

CHAPTER I.

THE GUESTS.

" Madam, new guests are come,
And brave ones."

SHAKSPERE.

JUST before the return of Count Felix, another guest had arrived at the castle of Mezeraye, and been welcomed with tears and affectionate embraces. The Countess, solitary and gloomy as she felt during the absence of her husband, which had of late become longer, and more

frequent, hailed the presence of her former friend from whom circumstances had much separated her. She was several years older than Angelique de Meri, and felt towards her something of the tenderness of an elder sister towards one who looked up to her for advice. She was flattered at the confidence reposed in her, and glad of the society of one to whom she could without fear name her own sorrows, for sorrow had of late taken possession of the spot where once peace and conjugal felicity had reigned.

Madeleine felt that the infirmities of her own temper were in a great measure the cause of her husband's estrangement, and the reflection did not conduce to her happiness. She felt that a gloom was stealing over her mind, which she was unable to conquer, and the coldness induced by suspicion, and a sense of wrong, prevented her from concealing from Count Felix her resentment of his indifference. Hitherto, when he returned after repeated

absences, she had met him with an averted brow and haughty demeanour, which was but little likely to induce his stay. He found his home dull, sad, and ungenial—his days were spent in the chase—his nights in solitary musings in his study, and as Madeleine never sought his society he did not intrude on her. She was not aware, on the morning after his return had been remarked by Xarifa, that he was in the château, for the old porter alone was cognizant of the fact, and as the Count had brought with him no attendant, and had given orders that she should not be disturbed, she remained in ignorance on the subject.

She sought her friend's chamber at an early hour, and listened with interest to her accounts of all that had displeased, disgusted, and amused her at the court, of which she knew nothing, and amidst the blushes of Angelique, she heard her fears and doubts respecting Lomaria.

" You are right to doubt both him and yourself," said she, " would I had done so too. I

loved Felix too well, and blinded myself to the fact that he felt no preference to me. My eyes are opened too late, and what is my life now but one of sorrow and regret."

"Where then is your husband?" asked Angelique, "has he really been absent so long as six months?"

"It is too true, Angelique," replied the Countess, "he occasionally writes and informs me that he is with his regiment on the frontier, and sometimes condescends to regret the necessity of his absence, and the impossibility of obtaining leave of absence; but I feel painfully certain that his will is far less than his power."

"But, my dear Madeleine, your husband has obtained his leave," said Angelique imprudently, "for I heard the Marquis de Sevigné name the fact some time since, and consequently expected to find him here when I wrote to you."

No sooner had Angelique said this than she

saw, by the sudden paleness which overspread the face of Madeleine, that her remark was ill-judged and she regretted having spoken of that which she was surprised into naming. Madeleine made no comment and their discourse turned into other channels.

"To-day," said Madeleine, "we hold a religious fête, in honor of the patron of our village, St. Alexis, and I have assembled some of our neighbours to meet my dear and unexpected friend. The prior, of the convent whose spires you see above the trees, will preside at our meeting. A young girl who has been brought up here, is this day to be received amongst the sisters of the order, and a procession will arrive to claim and take her with them. These, my dear Angelique, are all the gaieties you will meet with amongst these solitary mountains, where the absence of a master in this château spreads a constant gloom around."

"I ask for nothing more pure, more holy,"

replied Angelique, "it will be indeed a happy contrast to all the frivolity to which I have too long been accustomed. Who is the young girl to whom you allude?—her lot is fortunate, so soon to quit a world whose every path is beset with dangers."

Madeleine turned away in some confusion, as she explained Xarifa's position, but avoided naming her objections to the life which the young heiress considered so blissful.

Meanwhile the bells of the convent were ringing, and the nuns were all in motion, making preparations for the fête, the only amusement that remains to them of the lost gaieties of a world, which, even in their solitary retreat, is never lost sight of by the strictest religious community. What, in fact, are the processions and ornaments, the banners and garlands, the dresses and ceremonies in which they rejoice, but another description of festival, dedicated to vanity and worldliness? The arrangement of a veil, though it be black,

the assumption of a character, though it be of humility, are but pieces of acting destined to deceive themselves and the lookers on, and gain a reputation, perhaps, little deserved, for sanctity, though not for fashion.

The nuns, amidst much scolding and importance, had succeeded in drilling their ranks in proper order. The monks, their neighbours, had succeeded in regulating their eyes and their steps, and the prior of Mezeraye and the abbess of St. Marie were satisfied with their respective troops, and began their march towards the castle, in the chapel, of which they were to receive the new aspirant to their holy state.

Xarifa woke that morning with a heart lighter than when she fell into her wearied slumber, for the presence of Count Felix assured her that her fate was not altogether sealed. He had so often procured for her trifling indulgences, had so frequently stood between her and censure and harshness, that

she could not but build hopes of assistance from him. She therefore dressed herself in the white robe and veil, which was brought her, and heard in silence, but without apparent indignation, of all the preparations for a scene of which she was destined to be the heroine.

Count Felix, meanwhile, had risen at day break: he had summoned his steward, and had been for some time busied in looking over accounts. He required a considerable supply of money, and gave his orders that a large sum should be ready for his use, in the course of a few days: he announced that his stay at the château could be but temporary, as he was expected back to join his regiment immediately.

"And now," said Count Felix, with a sigh, "it is fitting that your lady be informed of my arrival. Let the Countess know that I will wait upon her when it is her pleasure. How fares your mistress? I trust she is well—is she in her chamber?"

"My mistress is with Mademoiselle de

Meri," answered the steward, " who arrived in Paris only last night. The procession of the convent will soon arrive, and we shall be joyful indeed that you are returned."

Felix felt considerable relief to hear that he should not have to encounter the reproachful looks of Madeleine alone, and with a light step soon followed the attendant, who had announced his return.

Their meeting was as cold and formal as usual, but Count Felix, as if resolved to break through the restraint of this manner, assumed a gay tone, and conversing with Angelique, became as lively and amusing as he was formerly wont to be. A pang shot through the heart of Madeleine. " Alas," she sighed " he can be all he once was, to others, but to me there is a strange difference—what have I done to deserve this; my love, my devotion to him alone are the cause of his estrangement: his gloom, his apparent coldness appear to me preferable to this careless indifference. He

attempts no apology for his long desertion, but treats it as a matter of course. Would I could feel as little as he does!"

"I fear, Mademoiselle de Meri," said Felix, "you will find us sadly rustic here. For my part, I am able to be so little at home in consequence of my military duties, that I am nearly as great a stranger as yourself. Madeleine will make us both welcome I am sure, and amuse us as much as her means will allow. What did I hear of a religious procession, which is to enliven us shortly."

"Xarifa," said the Countess, coldly, "is to enter the convent of St. Marie, and to-day is fixed for the nuns to claim her."

"How, my pretty Xarifa, the wild untamed Bohemian, a nun!" cried Felix. "When did she resolve on this?"

"It has been resolved for her," replied Madeleine, somewhat sternly. "My wishes are at least law amongst my dependents."

"But you do not act against her own wish?"

asked Felix. "You do not condemn her to a life for which she has no choice? That would be tyranny, not kindness."

"Where kindness is thrown away," retorted the Countess, "severity must follow."

"By no means," said Felix. "Madeleine, I disapprove of this, and must see Xarifa myself, and hear from her own mouth what she really feels."

"Count Felix," replied Madeleine, "we will speak of this at another time. Mademoiselle de Meri can feel but little entertainment in this discussion."

Angelique, who had listened in silence, and some confusion, to these observations, endeavoured to change the current of thought, by remarking that of late the Bohemians had become very numerous in France.

"It is strange," said she, "they seem to appear suddenly as it were in swarms, and are gone almost as quickly. Paris has latterly been overrun with them. They are at all the thea-

tres as actors and dancers, but they refuse long engagements, and can never be relied on, so erratic are their habits."

"I passed a troop of them on my way hither," said Felix, "they are encamped in a valley amongst the hills. A band of them are, they told me, travelling to Lyons, and intend stopping wherever they can attract attention, in order to exhibit their dances. They promise to visit Mezeraye in their course, and we shall probably soon see them here."

"They will not be allowed," said Madeleine, "the Prior has given orders that none of these vagabonds approach within the precints of the convent. It is indeed time that Xarifa were placed in security."

"Why, my dear Madeleine?" said Felix. "What does she know of them? she was an infant when taken from her tribe, and it is unlikely that she should have any desire to join them."

"You do not know her?" answered the

Countess. "You are so little here, that every thing sounds strange in your ears. Suffice it that the Bohemians are forbidden in this district."

"Probably you are right," said her husband carelessly, as he approached one of the windows of the castle, "but what are these approaching? Methinks they are a strange accompaniment to a religious ceremony, and prove but little the reverence for monkish authority."

As he spoke he pointed towards the avenue which led to the castle, down which a singular group were advancing with a band of shrill instruments heralding their approach. They were dressed in wild and fantastic garments, bore green branches in their hands, and advanced singing a chorus as they tossed their tambourines in the air, and whirled round and round rapidly.

When they reached the court yard of the castle, they ranged themselves in a circle, and commenced a dance of much grace and beauty.

"Oh," said Angelique, "this is the very troop which has caused so much sensation lately in Paris—where the rage for dancing is at this moment at its height."

After looking for some time at their exhibition, Felix gave orders that they should be entertained in spite of the evident vexation of his wife.

"My dear Madeleine," said he, "why should we render our château a mere dungeon full of gloom? Depend on it our people will find much more amusement in seeing the antics of these artists, than in the oft repeated processions of monks and nuns, which you seem to imagine will delight them."

While he spoke the door of the saloon where they stood was suddenly thrown open, and to the surprise and annoyance of the Countess, Xarifa appeared. Her brow was contracted, and her step determined, as she advanced into the middle of the chamber, and stood before Count Felix.

"Count," said she, "I am come to appeal to you as my only friend in this castle. Will you see me forced into a convent against my will, or will you hold forth your hand to save me?"

"Xarifa," answered Felix, "you have done right to apply to me. Be assured that as long as I am master here, you shall not need a protector. Why do you fear to trust the Countess?"

"Your Countess has abandoned me," replied Xarifa. "I have wept to her in vain. I am condemned to the gloom of a cloister, and already the train of those who seek me approaches. I am decked in the robes of a victim, and if you fail me what power have I to resist the tyranny which oppresses me?"

"Xarifa, you are ungrateful and bold," said the Countess, "but since I must speak and assert my rights—be it known to you that I am mistress here—absolute mistress by hereditary title—and I can give laws to my vassals, which

none may dare dispute. Count Felix, you will bear this in mind, and not become the champion, in vain, to this perverse girl, who knows not her own interest."

"Enough, madam," said Felix somewhat sternly, "this is an idle boast. Xarifa shall be my care; retire, young girl. I will myself meet the Prior, and converse with him on this subject—fear not to be forced to embrace a life which is distasteful to you. You shall at least be allowed a year to consider and choose your own path; meanwhile let smiles return to your cheek, for we will have no more clouds and gloom. We have, to-night, an assembly where you must appear with all the cheerfulness which once used to delight us. Your friends, the Bohemians," added he gaily, "shall enliven us with their art, and all this sadness shall be forgotten."

While Felix was yet speaking, the loud bell of the castle sounded, and the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard in the court below. A servant

entered to announce the arrival of visitors, and Felix heard with astonishment that his friend de Sevigné had arrived accompanied by several friends from Paris.

Angelique, uttering an exclamation of dismay, fled to her chamber; while Xarifa, glad to escape the angry look of the Countess, hurried away with a step much lighter than she had entered.

As she passed through a long corridor which led to her turret, she suddenly encountered a party who had just mounted the stairs and were advancing. The two foremost were young men attired in the height of fashion, their air was military and bold, their countenances full of gaiety and confidence, and as they paused a moment, to give her way, one of them uttered a loud exclamation of admiration.

"By heaven, Felix is a happy man!" exclaimed one of the cavaliers, "what a lovely vision—it must be our blessed Lady herself veiled in white, to welcome us—a happy omen,

Lomaria," added the speaker, who was no other than de Sevigné—" it bodes well for our cause."

" She is a divinity!" exclaimed Lomaria, gazing after Xarifa, " methinks it bodes ill; for her charms might well efface those of my golden beauty, " who, I trust, nevertheless, is here?"

" Doubt it not," returned de Sevigné, " but here we are arrived in the presence."

Felix advanced to meet his friends with apparent cordiality, and introduced his Countess with assumed ease. Madeleine haughtily and coldly expressed their welcome, and took the first opportunity of retiring, leaving them together.

" My friend, Lomaria," said de Sévigné, " was anxious to profit by the occasion of my resolve to visit you, as he has long heard of you, and desired your friendship—I assured him of a welcome, and hope you will admit us for a few days to your secret bower, where

you have too long secluded yourself, and the fair enchantress who holds you in thrall. What a wild region is this in which you hide! we had much difficulty in finding our way, and like knights of old, were indebted to minstrels for the information. We followed close at the heels of the Bohemians who guided us hither, for we lost ourselves amongst the mountains."

"I am but newly arrived myself," said Felix, "and have but a few days to spare, which I trust you will spend with me."

"You will then return with us to Paris?" said de Sevigné.

"I fear not," answered Felix, with a slight hesitation in his manner, "I have business at Lyons that—"

"Well, we will accompany you if you please," returned his friend, "for our time is of no consequence, and we are entirely at your devotion."

Felix made no answer to this proposition, but exerted himself to appear pleased at the visit so unexpectedly paid him.

He was not the only person in the chateau by whom their arrival was considered inopportune. Madeleine recollected with some bitterness that the letters of de Sevigné were the first cause of her disagreement with her husband, while Mademoiselle de Meri trembled on hearing that guests from Paris had so soon invaded her retreat, dreading that the subject of Lomaria would recur, though she little expected he was there in person.

When she found it was indeed so her annoyance was extreme. At first she resolved to seclude herself entirely, but reflected that to do so would be to betray her fears, and her want of reliance on her own powers. Lomaria and herself accordingly met, and the well-feigned astonishment of the latter on seeing her succeeded in convincing her that his visit was unpremeditated.

"Paris of late," said he mournfully to the Countess Madeleine, "has become more and more distasteful to me, and I willingly accepted he offer of de Sevigné to accompany him here.

I little expected to meet any former friend, and had reckoned on passing a period of blank indifference in these wild retreats, but I had not imaged to myself the presence of those with whom I am so happy as now to reside for a few brief hours, which, alas! will only make the future solitude of my life more dismal."

Lomaria, from the first moment of his arrival at Mezeraye, had resolved to gain the Countess as his friend; but practised as he was in the ways of the world, he did not find the task easy.

Madeleine heard not with the same credulity as Angelique had done his dangerously seductive words, and, soured by disappointment, was ready to suspect that deceit lurked beneath them. This assumed humility, devotion, and sadness, were not however without their effect, and Angelique began to blame herself for harshness and ingratitude, and to condemn the lessons of prudence, which her very stars seemed combined to efface from her memory.

She saw that Madeleine was prejudiced against persons in his position in society, and felt certain that she judged harshly, when she warned her against those acts of which she began to doubt the existence. By degrees she no longer thought of her lover with fear, or avoided his presence. She listened to his tender reproaches for her absence, and allowed his implied declarations of attachment. Lomaria's triumph was now near its completion, and he felt that the object of his journey was accomplished.

CHAPTER II.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

" I nightly lodge her in an upper tower,
The key whereof myself have ever kept,
And thence she cannot be conveyed away."

SHAKSPERE.

THE fête of St. Alexis, the patron saint of Mezeraye was kept with greater gaiety than had been customary at the château, in consequence of the arrival of so many guests. The peasants were much delighted with the feats and dances of the gypsies, which, however, gave great umbrage to the religious communities of the neighbourhood; the procession of the

sisters of St. Marie was scarcely heeded, and the monks of the convent chanted as they walked in solemn order from their convent to the chapel of the castle, almost unmarked. The positive refusal of Count Felix to permit the reception of Xarifa into the order against her own desire, was a cause of deep offence; and it was sullenly, and with offended pride, that the prior of Mezeraye, that day, went through the accustomed ceremonies.

The lady of the castle, however, had not passively relinquished her right to command in her own domain, and Xarifa had by her orders been placed in close confinement immediately after the religious ceremonies were concluded. Count Felix observed with vexation that the Zingara was not allowed to appear. His enquiries for her were met by his wife with coldness and excuses, and were by no means satisfactory to his mind.

To add to the annoyance of Madeleine, her guests also were loud in their demands that the

beautiful recluse should appear, as they declared that the plea of indisposition would not avail, since her appearance contradicted the excuse.

The Zingari or gipsies, meantime, were entertaining the assembly by their grace and talent. Now they appeared in one garb, now in another, changing their voices as quickly and completely as their costumes, and singing songs, and executing dances peculiar to different nations.

Lomaria and de Sevigné were loud in their praises, and Angelique looked on with pleasure, while the Countess frowned, and her husband's mind seemed painfully pre-occupied. One dance of Moors was rapturously applauded by the guests, accompanied as it was with words to an air of peculiar spirit and beauty.

MOORISH SONG.

The tulip knows how false and cold
  Are all earth's joys that seem so bright,
For still she loves the cup to hold,
  And drinks the falling dews all night.

And many a jewell'd goblet lies
By perfum'd streams in Aden's groves;
And there the maidens of Paradise
Fill the Faithful the draught he loves.

When the pilgrim roams o'er the desert waste,
And hails the gush of waters near,
As blest is the wave he stoops to taste
As Zemzem's well to the mother's ear;
But the wave, the flower, the sacred well,
Or the cups of gold that the Blessed cheer,
These ruby drops could never excel,
Or yield one charm that we have not here.

While the Zingari were singing, one who had entered with their party, but who stood aloof during their exhibition, wrapped in a long dark Spanish cloak and flapped hat, had moved stealthily round the circle, as if seeking some one, and his dark fixed eye wandered coldly from face to face, as if disappointed in what he sought.

Musa continued to pass slowly along, at moments when he found himself unobserved; at length he reached the spot, where Count Felix sat in abstracted silence, apparently

unconscious of the scene before him. His head was leaning on his hand, and a look of care, anxiety, and impatience was on his countenance. Musa looked on him with a long, deep, earnest gaze, and when he withdrew the glance, a paleness, as of death, spread itself over his face, he compressed his lips violently, as if to prevent the utterance of some exclamation that rose to them, and hurried on. His next pause was behind the seat on which the Countess was placed with Angelique, and these words fell on his ear:—

"It is enough, Angelique. This girl is froward and wild—she belongs to a strange race, which cannot be reclaimed: nothing but severity can avail with them. I cannot prevent, at present, their intrusion here; but I can save Xarifa, in spite of herself, from becoming their prey; for if she were not kept a prisoner, they would find means to hold communication with her, and the consequences might be dangerous. She is my vassal, and

I shall hold her in durance as long as I see fit."

"I had no idea," returned Angelique, "that you could really carry your prerogative so far—why even Count Felix himself, if he offended, might fall under the same coercion."

This was said sportively, with a view of averting the storm, which Mademoiselle de Meri perceived her entreaties for the enlargement of Xarifa had roused, and with an intention of turning the serious mood of her friend into one of lighter character: but she had struck a jarring chord, and she trembled when she observed the severity of Madeleine's countenance as she replied.

"You speak jestingly, but are ignorant that not only have I the power to hold my husband prisoner, but his life itself is in my hands. The law has not been repealed which places sovereign power in the hands of the Countess of Mezeraye; and though it has long been unused, it exists not the less. I could condemn

to death any of those who live under my jurisdiction, were there need. But you need not look pale, Angelique, you would not come under that head. It is only over my own dependents that I rule."

Angelique, though she tried to smile, felt uneasy and unhappy to observe the gloomy turn of her friend's mind; and as she looked from hers to the abstracted and indifferent face of her husband, she saw too clearly that affection existed no longer between them.

"How different," her heart whispered, "with Lomaria, who is so little understood by all around him: can I wonder that Madeleine is harsh to him, when she has so much reason to complain of him she loves so vainly. She is unjust to all for the sake of one. Felix could never have loved her, while Lomaria—at this moment I feel that his eyes are on my face—that he is now endeavouring to read my heart. Alas! he will soon know how indulgent that heart is to him!"

Meantime, while every one besides was occupied in amusement, confined in a lower chamber of her turret, the grated window of which looked only on a blackened pile of rocks, overgrown with shrubs and clinging plants, which unenlivened by the sun, wore a gloomy and unhealthy hue, Xarifa remained in solitude, sullenly brooding over the tyranny which kept her captive here, instead of being free to roam, as of yore, over hill and plain. She looked hopelessly from her casement, and saw that no chance of escape by that means was offered her; she walked rapidly up and down the small chamber, now passionately weeping, and now gloomily silent.

"Oh that my brother were aware of my imprisonment," exclaimed she mentally, "he would at least make an effort to deliver me. The Count has then deserted me as well—selfish are they all, without a thought but to pleasure themselves. I may be left to starve, to perish, and who would care for the Zingara? who would pity or revenge me?"

A burst of tears came to her relief, after indulging in which she threw herself on the stone seat in the embrasure of the window, and gazed listlessly forth. The moon had now risen, and its clear light fell on the rocks which were piled beyond, like a rude altar in some desert place—the darkness beneath them became deeper still, and a fearful gulf seemed spread beneath her—suddenly the shrubs which overshadowed the largest rock were shaken, and from their shade a figure emerged into the space immediately at its base. One glance sufficed to tell her that she beheld her brother, and uttering a cry, she held forth her arms through the grating.

"Musa," she exclaimed, "have you heard all? and are you not come to be my deliverer?"

"Xarifa," returned Musa, earnestly, "I have indeed been led to your prison, but by no human hand. Your star shone over this spot, and here I knew that you must abide. Fear not, your captivity shall not be long—

this is not the manner in which you can fulfil your destiny. I have this day discovered that which places our foes in our power—we shall soon triumph. Meanwhile the tyrant Countess will visit you ere long: she, like all other weak, vain gentiles, would fain know more than is decreed to mortals to gather of their fate. She must be made to seek our tents—you can offer to be her guide: when she would question you tell her her secret wish is known to you, persuade her to give you freedom to accompany her, and once with us you shall return no more."

"Oh, my brother," said Xarifa, "my heart yearns to our people—can you then take me with you—can you protect and let me live with you? all my dream will then be accomplished—all my wishes satisfied. You will tell me the mysteries of our faith and race—you will satisfy my desire for knowledge. You will tell me all I long to hear, and my life will be in future one endless summer of joy."

"Alas!" replied Musa, "your aspirations are too sanguine—the lot of man is toil and disappointment. All we sigh for, and strive ceaselessly to obtain, when nearly gained glides from us like a shadow, or if gained proves worthless. I have passed a life in hope, in visions of glory and of greatness, and I have met with sorrows and vexations, which of a young man have made me a patriarch. Expect no happiness in the world, Xarifa, to continue; it gleams but has no steady light."

"You speak sadly, dear Musa," said his sister, "and doubtless have known much misfortune: but I, who have never left the precincts of this castle, who have never, except in dreams, seen another existence, I have shed bitter tears: I have learnt that tyranny, cruelty, selfishness, and coldness, are the attributes of the people amongst whom I have been kept, and I know that my star ordains me a far different station. The priest and nuns who throng the gloomy walls of yonder convents, have per-

secuted me with mysteries to which my mind would not give heed—I would fain know the creed of my fathers—I would be told the history of my own nation. Tell me, Musa, let me hear from your lips the secrets so long kept from me. Tell me your adventures and those of our tribe, and let me at once know and belong to you."

"Sister," returned Musa, "what you ask is not easily told, but I will essay to make you acquainted with those whom your heart's affection acknowledges so warmly. The *Caloré* of foreign lands, know more than we of Spain: I have heard much of the lore which our sages still possess. I have travelled far, and seen many people, many countries, and many cities, more than all I have visited the spots of our former greatness, where, even now, our mysteries are not extinct, although our people are everywhere hemmed in with enemies, to whose faith and practices they are obliged outwardly to conform. I have seen the great Shoba in

its glorious ruins—its walls still entire, its paved causeways and its mighty gates, the carved marble of its majestic doors, and its exalted pillars which once supported our temples. I have wandered amidst the painted caverns of Egypt, and gazed on the eternal Sphinxes, whose voices have told me where to seek our scattered tribes—oceans have not impeded me—new worlds have opened to me wonders yet undreamed of, and the mountain ruins of Tescoça have shown me pyramids as stupendous in the Mexican desert as in the plains of Thebes. The enormous cities of the 'Wandering Giant Masons' I have seen, and all the petty inventions of modern art appear to me but toys compared with that once known to our magnificent race, whose power could move mountains, whose will could make ways through rocks, who, in a thought, could transport themselves from country to country—who ruled the world, and who have lost all!

We have now no faith, Xarifa, no idols, no

Gods, we fear to worship falsely, and *we wait*—the time will come when it shall be revealed to us *Who* is the Truth, till then we bow to none exclusively, although we sometimes form to ourselves a vision of our deity—sometimes he seems enthroned upon a lion couch surrounded by flames that burn everlastingly, and on his head he wears a crown of lotus with a lofty pillar rising from its flowers. His name is written on a golden tablet, suspended in air above him, but none can read it; a cross of many coloured feathers is on his breast, which a serpent with shining scales surrounds, his face is too luminous to be seen, and his voice has never yet been heard. He is everywhere, he pervades all space, yet he is nowhere, therefore, do we avoid all worship lest we do amiss.

We know too that an evil spirit exists, and were we to do homage, he might claim us for his own, as we see neither the good nor the evil, and might mistake one for the other. Some of us have the power of seeing spirits; I

have myself beheld the awful plague spirit sailing from place to place like a female figure covered with a dark veil; I too have seen the shadowy Wilas in the forest depths of Servia, and where they dance on the banks of rivers; and the dwarfs and fountain fairies amongst the wizard circles of Brittany; and in the caverns beneath those giant stones, have watched at night for the warning voices which should tell of the fate of our tribes."

"Musa!" exclaimed Xarifa, "for what offence were we, once so great and glorious, condemned to the ignominy into which we are fallen? What had we done to draw down such a curse upon us?"

"That is a secret which is yet to be learnt," replied the enthusiast, "some say our greatest monarch having conquered the whole world, and subdued every thing to his will, finding nothing more to withstand him made war on heaven itself. He built a pyramid which

reached to the skies, having piled rocks on rocks to an immeasurable height, from hence he launched a javelin, and it fell back from the clouds tinged with blood; from that period the tribes who were his followers were unable to find their way back to their own homes, and have been condemned to wander ever since over the earth, till the Great Spirit is appeased and leads them all to the spot whence they set out. Some relate that when the Virgin and her son were wanderers, and asked the hospitality of our nation it was refused them, for which we are condemned to wander as they did, houseless and unfriended till our time of penance is past away. We know nothing but this—that we are outcasts and forsaken by all, contemned, reviled and hunted from place to place. Our hearts are open to none but those of our race—we hold communion only with the Gentiles to deceive them—they are our slaves, while they think themselves our masters, we scorn their laws, their habits, their manners,

and their dwellings, we conform in seeming only, to deceive and injure them is our aim and end: but we reward good with good, if by chance, which is rare, we meet with it, and if we meet with ill, which is common, we revenge ourselves. We permit no unions with any but of our own race, our women are sacred, but they must be pure, we trust in them, and if they deceive us they die."

"And is it true, Musa?" enquired Xarifa, "that our race know the future?"

"It is a gift," said he, "which some of us possess, but we are all bound to profess the knowledge, as it gives us power over our enemies, and we are, by this means, able to circumvent and take advantage of them for our interest. There are those amongst us who have received their breeding in the east, who deem that human sacrifices to the great goddess Kali are demanded; but this is little practised in Europe, and seldom resorted to. As we are scattered over every region of the globe, in

certain peculiarities we differ from each other, but our language, habits, and signs make us known as brethren, in whatever land we chance to meet."

"Alas! my brother," said Xarifa, "would that I were free to join you. I loathe the life I have so long been forced to lead, and sigh for liberty and the bright air of Heaven."

"I am near you now, Xarifa," answered he, "our tribe is close by, in the skirts of the forest—some of them are this night within the castle walls. When we quit its precincts you will depart with us—fear not, we shall soon meet again."

So saying, he waved his hand, and springing from the platform of rock, amongst the dark foliage beneath, was lost to her view.

The first dawn of day had scarcely broken, when Xarifa heard the key turn in the lock of her prison door, and the form of the Countess Madeleine appeared before her. She was very pale, and evidently greatly agitated; she held

in her hand a small scroll, and as she seated herself opposite the Zingara she rivetted her eyes upon the writing on it.

"Xarifa," she said, at length, "do you believe the tradition that asserts your race to possess the knowledge of futurity? Do you think they can indeed read the secrets of the stars?"

"I know my race," answered Xarifa sullenly, "but as a captive eagle may know the sun, how should I be able to tell you aught that concerns them?"

"But you are of a nature unlike all others, you are capable of many things unknown to the general herd," exclaimed the Countess, "you have at times interpreted my dreams, you you have foreseen events of slight import—you can, perhaps, now assist me. I will give you liberty—I will promise that you shall be free from importunity for at least a year to come, and not compelled to enter the convent, if you will aid me now. Dreadful doubts oppress and terrify me: I have received a warning which I cannot interpret. Read this; I found

it in my chamber, last night. To none but you dare I confide the secret."

Xarifa took the paper and read these words —"The stars can speak of hidden mysteries; thy husband's tells a tale of———; wouldst thou know more?—the tents of the proscribed are near. Seek and learn."

Xarifa gave back the paper to her mistress. "What know I of this?" she said coldly, "I cannot unriddle this mystery."

"But there are of your tribe who can?" cried Madeleine eagerly. "You have spoken with some of them of late—you could guide me to their haunts. Will you do so? I swear to you, Xarifa, that you shall henceforth be free and unquestioned if you will agree to assist me. Let us go now, at once, before any are stirring in the castle—I must be satisfied, my mind is torn with agitation: some fearful evil hangs over me, or Felix is threatened. I would know the worst at once. Shall we set forth, dear Xarifa—speak—do not deny me."

Xarifa rose, fixed on the Countess her large,

dark eyes, with that blank look which forbade all meaning to be divined in them, and pointing to the closed door made a sign of assent.

Madeleine, with a trembling hand, unlocked the door, and in a few moments they had descended the winding stair, had reached the outer court and were far away towards the forest.

CHAPTER III.

FASHIONABLE FRIENDS.

SPEED. Launce—by mine honesty welcome to Milan.
LAUNCE. Forswear not thyself, sweet youth; for I am not welcome.

SHAKSPERE.

AT a period when luxury and profusion were at the utmost height, in the gayest and most magnificent of all capitals, that which attracted the most attention for the moment, was the gorgeous entertainments given by some new candidates for public notice—two sisters of Polish birth, daughters of a rich merchant, who, dying, had left them all his wealth. They

had not long been arrived in Paris, had the best introductions, and were received with the utmost cordiality by all the fashionable portion of the community, who flocked to their balls, fêtes, and petit soupers, where the greatest profusion and magnificence prevailed.

They were called Lobinská—were neither of them very young, but witty, gay, and full of spirit—a foreign accent and singularity of manners, peculiar to their country, gave them an interest in the eyes of all the lovers of novelty; and nothing was talked of in Paris but *les Divines,* as they were termed. To be of their parties was the great object of distinction, and even Ninon was for a time eclipsed. Madame de Maintenon had already visited them, and de Montespan had appeared in all her beauty and glory, surrounded by a host of fashion.

Their masquerades were amusing in the extreme, and at that time, when the love of fine dancing was a perfect rage, nowhere was it seen in such perfection.

One morning de Sevigné, who had in the course of a very brief period become extremely weary of the wild country to which he had introduced his friend Lomaria, entered his apartment with an open letter in his hand.

"Lomaria," said he, "I can endure this life no longer. De Mezeraye is dull—his wife is sullen—you are occupied with your conjugal scheme—the pretty little Zingara is shut up from the sight of man—Mademoiselle de Meri is sentimental—the rocks are rugged and gloomy—the woods severe and silent—the country and the people altogether intolerable—and I, wearied to death, I shall return immediately to Paris—great changes have taken place since we left—new divinities have appeared, and old ones are forgotten. These Polish fairies absorb every thought, charm every mind. I can no longer exist without seeeing them. Their hotel is the finest thing ever beheld; it is said the King goes incognito next week. Good God! to think of being absent at such a moment."

"A revolution has taken place—Louis has left off his moustachios! it will be no longer correct to appear with them. Well, the fashion will become me admirably; there is something more pure, more simple-minded, in being without such an adornment. It will be the means of changing the character of the nation—a thing to be desired—for we are become coarse and rough to a degree which destroys the nerves. De Grammont tells me that enormous watches are now worn; they were small in the age in which we last saw Paris. We have slept away an existence, and shall return like Ogier the Dane, to another court, with all our antique vulgarities about us—objects of scorn and ridicule. De Fontanges appears in her coach with a pair of the most hideous little dogs that ever were seen—any price is given now for similar little monsters. The form of the sword too is altered. Brancas has exhibited one in the shape of a scimitar, which has had great success.

"Adieu, my dear friend, I shall see Felix, and try if anything will persuade him to leave his gloomy old castle, where I never can venture to bury myself again. He is quite an altered man, and dreadfully changed for the worse. As for his wife, that he should long have ceased to care for her is not surprising, but what does he do with himself! He is neither with us, nor with the army, as I find he pretends. Perhaps he passes some of his time in la Trappe; it is quite as lively as his home, Heaven knows!"

"I shall not be long in following you," replied Lomaria, "the heiress is mine, I have only now to name the day, which shall be as speedily as possible; but to speak truth, I am already half disgusted with this silly heiress, for I have gained her without much trouble, and she loves me, a thing I never can endure in a woman. Expect me soon in Paris, I will manage that Angelique returns shortly, and probably my wedding will take place at

the same time as that of Brancas to his cousin."

"For heaven sake do not bring in the fashion of marrying," said de Sevigné, "that is a mode I cannot submit to, all else may be endured, but any thing so dull and sad as that is beyond my philosophy. I shall stop on my journey at the little inn at Seignelay, and if it were not too much trouble I would take off that pretty hostess, but perhaps Collard can manage it for me."

After some more conversation of similar importance, in which the friends exhibited the happy bent of their dispositions, de Sevigné repaired to Count Felix, and announced his intention of shortening his stay; the satisfaction with which this announcement was received was so evident, that the guest could not but observe it.

"Felix," said he mentally, "has some scheme on foot which he wishes to conceal from us. I will circumvent him, he wishes to get rid of

us that he may escape detection; this is not fair, if he would put us in his confidence we would assist him, but since he tries to cheat his friends he deserves exposure. I shall delay my departure a few days, and watch him."

Much to the evident discomfiture of his host, de Sevigné therefore continued to linger on from day to day after he had spoken of going, and thus, whatever might have been the plans of Felix, they were thwarted, and his impatience began to be beyond the power of concealment.

That day de Sevigné began his system of bantering persecution, and during dinner he addressed his friend in these words:—"My dear Felix, I greatly fear that our visit here has been inopportune, if so, I entreat you to speak the truth; we have been friends long enough to prevent the necessity of our using concealment towards each other. I assure you, Countess," said he addressing Madeleine,

" before he was married, Felix was all that was frank and open, but you keep him so strongly in your chains that we know not his habits now. He has, it appears, some business of importance at Lyons, we have offered to accompany him, but he rejects our offer, and now we find he has changed his route to Bordeaux—this would be a suspicious circumstance in a bachelor, but married men are privileged persons. Do persuade him dear Countess to take you to Paris; let us all go in a body, and add some new stars to the galaxy which now shines there. We can go by easy stages, resting from time to time, and I can recommend the most agreeable places, and the houses of entertainment are not so bad; for instance, at a little retired village near Auxerre, where Lomaria and I stopped a night; we were surprised at our accommodation—and such a pretty hostess! though that might not interest you, Countess, as it did us."

Count Felix, while de Sevigné thus ran on,

was extremely annoyed, and at this moment uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"My dear de Sevigné," said he "what romances are these—fine inns on the road side and pretty hostesses, when all the world knows that nothing can be more wretched than travelling, and that the peasants have little enough of beauty to boast of."

"You wrong our friend," said Lomaria, "the girl of whom he speaks is a perfect wonder, not only of beauty but of grace. De Sevigné is in despair because she has a husband, and he cannot hope for her alliance."

"But I shall certainly visit her again on my way to Paris. I fortunately know her aunt. You must remember her, Felix, the buxom landlady of the café de l'Ange, Madame Collard, who is a sort of Ninon in her quarter?"

Count Felix answered carelessly that he knew nothing of her, or had forgotten.

"Well," returned de Sevigné, "but if you

had seen the niece you would have had a better memory; but, of course, marriage effaces all all things. I beg pardon, Countess, for naming pretty landladies before your husband. Be careful not to let him go to Paris without you, nevertheless, for Seignelay is not far out of the road, though we found it only by chance, as we lost ourselves amongst the vines."

The Countess Madeleine, though she endeavoured to hear all this idle raillery without emotion was deeply impressed with the levity of principle exhibited on all occasions by her unwelcome guests; and Felix was seriously annoyed at the want of prudence or intentional indiscretion of his former companion. His sole anxiety was to get rid of the society thus forced upon him, and he counted the hours till they should fix a time for departure.

At length, to the inexpressible relief of Count Felix, de Sevigné took his leave, and he saw him quit the court of the castle with few

hospitable regrets. Lomaria still lingered, and until his departure he could not hope to leave a home which was every hour more distasteful to him, and from which affairs of importance called him which he did not choose to communicate to any one.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIPSY TENTS.

"Quel est le cœur qui peut se donner tout entier, sans vouloir un autre cœur aussi tout entier? Qui donc accepte de bonne foi de l'amitié pour prix de l'amour?

DE STAEL.

THE first streaks of daylight had scarcely tinged the sky with gold when the Zingari were in readiness for a sudden departure, according to their wont. Musa had mounted his horse, one of remarkable strength and fleetness, though rugged and unseemly in appearance, and of a small size; another was ready beside him with a woman's saddle over

which a large thick cloak was thrown. The young chief was looking anxiously in the direction of the castle, and presently springing from his horse he gave it to one of the men.

"Retire a little," said he "two females are coming to the tents—they may be scared should your bold eyes look upon them. One is my sister, your future queen—she stays with us, the other you need take no note of. At my signal, approach—no word—no sound. Xarifa will mount one horse, I the other: we shall then depart, and each man can glide away. The leaves rustle as if fawns were passing—it is doubtless their step—begone."

The band slunk noiselessly away, leaving Musa alone at the entrance of a forest glade, when he beheld Xarifa and the Countess advancing timidly towards him. He stepped forward and accosted them.

"You are welcome," said he, "time presses, and we have many miles to ride before night. I summoned you, lady," he added addressing

the Countess, " to warn, if not enlighten you. Count Felix has a secret which concerns you nearly, but it is not my purpose now to do more than put you on your guard. His absences are frequent, his motives unknown; keep watch and let him not quit the castle if you value his affection. For my sister I would thank you, but that imprisonment but ill agrees with our race, and a convent is not in future to be her home. Imagine not that gratitude inspires this warning. I have a deeper feeling—one you may, perhaps, one day know—it matters not—you are warned."

" Speak further," exclaimed the Countess becoming very pale, " these words are nothing —of what do you accuse my husband? What is his secret, and of what should I beware?"

" Question Count Felix; he can tell you much," answered Musa; " for me, my part is done, at least for the present. My sister stays with me."

The Countess uttered an exclamation.

"Xarifa!" she said, "you will not desert your early friend—you will not leave me."

Xarifa turned away and gave her hand to her brother.

At this moment a sharp cry was heard from the little wood: Musa looked in the direction, and beheld, advancing towards them, a band of soldiers, with the Prior of Mezeraye in their company. He stood immediately on the defensive, but several rushing forward at the same time as his band appeared from their covert, an immediate encounter took place. The gipsies defended themselves with courage, but their better appointed adversaries gave them little chance, and they were beaten back, Xarifa and the Countess remaining under the protection of the Prior and several of his party. Musa had only time to make a sign to his sister and to bid her be of good cheer, as her deliverance was but delayed; he then gained the wood, mounted his horse, and followed by one of his band, who bestrode that

intended for Xarifa, set off at full speed, leaving her whom he had hoped to rescue more than ever in the power of those who thought it their duty to keep her captive.

The Prior of Mezeraye, indignant at his orders being laughed to scorn by the gipsy band, whom he had forbidden to approach the convent, had sent to the town of Le Puy, and had demanded of the bishop a company of men at arms, resolved to dislodge the intruders by force since his commands had been set at naught. His surprise was great when he found the Countess in conference with the chief of the proscribed party, and he escorted her and her companion to the castle with feelings somewhat excited. Madeleine was too much absorbed with the events of the morning to offer any explanation, and Xarifa was again conducted to her solitary chamber in the tower, once more a prisoner.

That day Lomaria took leave of his affianced

bride Angelique de Meri, and Count Felix saw another of his guests leave the castle. His spirits revived and he was able to meet the Countess and her friend at table with renewed cheerfulness.

"And now, Madeleine," said he, "since your charming companion is not yet tired of our wild mountains, I shall quit you for a short space, for I am ordered to join my regiment at Metz forthwith. I had hoped to have staid longer with you this time, but I find it impracticable."

"How, Count Felix," said Madeleine, "are you indeed obliged to leave your home so soon. I am singularly unfortunate in never being able to secure your society for a few weeks together. I think, however, as your wife, you owe it to me to explain the business which is so urgent."

"I have said that the duties of my regiment require my presence," said Felix coldly.

"It will not suffice, Count Felix," returned

his wife. "I must speak to you—I must be heard."

"Madam," said Felix rising, "why do you force me to reply harshly? I have no further explanation to give, my duties must be attended to, and I have no power to contend against my orders."

"Your duties occupy you much indeed," retorted Madeleine, "would they were less or better performed!"

The door closed upon the retreating form of the Count as, having paid his compliment to Mademoiselle de Meri, he disappeared.

"Oh, Angelique!" exclaimed the Countess, "is not my fate hard? This man was all in all to me. I gave him not only my fortune, my possessions, my dignities, but, alas! I gave him my love undivided and sincere. I asked, but his, in return, and what is my reward—neglect and coldness, scorn and insult. But I will be revenged! I will endure this no more: a fatal secret hangs over me, I will discover it,

and let Count Felix tremble. He has deeply injured me—let him beware of my roused indignation."

"Dear Madeleine," exclaimed Angelique, "be not thus moved, believe me it is useless thus to give way to anger for wrongs which perhaps exist not. Soothe him and shame him by your patience rather than irritate him by your resentment. His coldness may be changed to tenderness again—his nature is not evil, and if you would condescend to humour him—"

"You talk idly, child!" cried the Countess. "I have already borne too much. I am treated as a cipher in my own domains; he has won all hearts towards him and I have not a friend left. No one pities me—all take his part and make excuses for him. 'Tis I who am to blame, and he may scorn me with impunity."

Angelique saw that to argue the point was useless: the Countess would only utter complaints and invectives, and her indignation knew no bounds, when a servant came to inform

her that Count Felix had left the castle. She was quite aware that he had no intention of returning for an indefinite period, and sullenly and gloomily did she look forward to the solitude into which she should be now plunged.

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVALS.

" She is peevish, sullen, froward;
And I may say to thee, this pride of hers,
Upon advice, hath drawn my love from her."

SHAKSPERE.

THE beautiful de Montespan sat at her toilet, but no smile was on her lip, no expression such as was wont to charm her volatile and royal lover, lingered on her countenance, where sat enthroned rage, jealousy, and envy. She had just heard that her rival, Mademoiselle d'Escorailles, who had assumed the name of de Fontanges, had been confirmed as Duchess,

with a pension of twenty thousand crowns. She had just heard that the court had been flocking to the chamber of the new favourite who had received her numerous visitors in her bed—that she had given herself the airs of a queen, and had made presents of the most magnificent description to all who had hurried to throw themselves at her feet. On the table beside the deserted beauty, lay a casket, containing a jewel of great value; this she took up, and gazing on it with a flushed cheek, exclaimed—

"Insulting minion! does she dare to offer this to me? Does she suppose that I will condescend to wear her gifts? Does Louis imagine that I will receive them? No, thus I spurn her offers, thus I contemn the provider of such baubles!" And as she spoke she tore the jewel from its case, and dashed it on the ground, where she trampled on it with fury, until the glittering fragments were scattered about the floor."

"I will be revenged!" cried she, vehemently. "Louis, the ungrateful man, whom I have loved, and served, and borne with so long, shall feel that I have power to injure him. De Rohan has many friends in Paris, and the Bretons and Normans are ripe for a revolt. What if I join my influence to theirs? what if I listen to the entreaties of those who have long importuned me with bribes and promises hitherto neglected? Louvois may be gained, he owes me much. Bourbon may at last find that I will listen to his proposal. The Electress of Bavaria favours the plan. Les Amis are well organised. I will consider—but at all events I will have vengeance."

As she spoke she opened a casket, and took from thence a paper, which she read attentively. It was a statement of the grievances of Holland, betrayed in the first place by English treachery, sacrificed to French ambition, groaning under a sense of injustice, disgusted at having been seduced into a peace

which compromised the interests of the nation, and setting forth the probability of success in case of hostilities against France being re-commenced. Numerous influential persons were named as favouring a plan of revolt in the distant maritime provinces; the inclination of the people of England to assist the Dutch secretly; the disgust of the Emperor of Germany at French duplicity, and many other reasons to prove that it was both politic and safe to join a large body of conspirators, at the head of whom was the Chevalier de Rohan, whose object was to admit the Dutch into France, and deliver over to them the provinces of Brittany and Normandy.

De Montespan read on with attention, and her colour went and came as she perused the paper, which, when she had read to an end, she deposited carefully in the casket, and rising, touched a little spring in the wall. A looking-glass which ornamented that part receded and left a space, in which she placed the box, and

reclosing the opening, restored the glass to its former position.

She had scarcely finished this arrangement and reseated herself, before a slight knock was heard at her door: she started—but, recovering herself, called out for the person, who desired admission, to enter. A side door opened, and pausing a moment at the threshold, appeared a figure dressed in black and wearing a hood which, as she threw it back, discovered the features of Madame de Maintenon.

"Am I an unwelcome visitor, my dear friend," she whispered in a soft, low tone.

"Come in, of course, Scarron," returned the beauty in a tone in which scorn struggled with assumed civility. "You know how welcome you ever are; though why you should visit one whom every one has forsaken, I cannot conceive. Believe me, it is bad policy, and I advise you to retire, before the walls tell of your imprudence."

"I come to tell you news, my dear Athe-

naïs," replied the widow meekly—" news which will perhaps sound strange, after all that has lately happened in a certain quarter. The king has, at length, as I predicted, become weary of the insipid beauty of her whom he has made a duchess, merely as a preliminary step to breaking with her altogether."

" Absurd!" cried de Montespan, "do you tell me this after the insult just offered me—look at those fragments on the ground: she dared to send me jewels, and an offer of her friendship —friendship! I know too well such a feeling never existed in the world. I have always been betrayed by those I trusted most, and I know full well what the professions of a rival mean, This doll—this painted puppet, shall not longer however enjoy her triumph! I have sworn it, and will never rest until I see her fall. The insolent upstart! Do you pretend that the infatuated Louis is about to break with her when only two days since she accompanied him to Fontainebleau, with more than regal splen-

dour. Did she not set out from St. Germains with a retinue fit for the expected Dauphine, her carriage drawn by eight milk white horses, covered with jewelled caparisons, the pannels of dove colour—his favorite color—devices and emblems covering it all over; the liveries of the same hue, with her cipher embroidered; more than a dozen chariots following, a train of mules glittering with gold and silver, a cortège brilliant with idle fashion, and gaudy with pomp and parade; and did she not receive, in the evening, with the ceremony of a petty sovereign?—has she not a court, and is he not her slave?"

"All this is true," said Madame de Maintenon—"and it is also true, that you have reproached me that the king passes hours in in my apartments, that he takes pleasure in my conversation, that he asks my advice, and that he speaks of me with respect."

"And why should I not reproach you?" retorted de Montespan," am I not superseded—neglected—tortured! Little did I think when

I importuned the king for the person whom he disliked, when I solicited him to grant the pension of the widow Scarron, whose name was odious to him, that I should have introduced a mistress of myself—one who would command in lieu of obeying."

"You are strangely unjust," said the widow, "you continue, against all reason to accuse me of designs on the king, even when his public actions show that I am not the object of his affection."

"His affection!" cried de Montespan, "it is himself that is the sole object of his affection, I know that too well:—but you flatter his vanity, you encourage his love of adulation, you twine and wind round his weak mind, and you will in the end supplant me—me—who have fed you—saved you from misery, from contempt —who have concealed your foibles, suppressed your faults, allowed the opinion of your sanctity to gain ground until Louis will not now believe you other than a pattern of virtue and piety.

I, who have done all this am to be cheated, despised, neglected!"

The passionate tears here choked her utterance.

"Alas!" said de Maintenon calmly, "you are scarcely generous thus to remind me of all the obligations I am most willing, nay, proud to confess I owe to you. Consider, my dear friend," she added smiling, "what you attribute to the king—do you imagine his heart has room for three attachments at a time?"

"This sneer," cried de Montespan, "avails not. No one knows better than you, that you speak truth in saying there are three who claim his attentions. There is one *in name*, my unhappy self—one *in fact*, this wretched girl—and one *in heart*, yourself."

Madame de Maintenon held her handkerchief to her face, it might be to conceal her tears while her rival continued.

"I know your artifice—your sly, cold, calculating methods to gain your ends — had I

listened to my first impulse—had I dismissed you when Louis himself desired me to do so, all had been right. I had kept my proper place in his regard, and you had returned to the insignificance from which I rescued you."

The widow bit her lip, but recovering herself instantly replied—

"And your son, your beloved child would have died. Had I not watched by his side, held his aching head, prayed, soothed, and attended on him with unwearying care, you would have had more cause for tears than you have now."

The mother's heart was touched, she became instantly calm, but she averted her face, and the gloom on her countenance did not immediately clear, while her companion went on:

"Do I deserve reproach from my best friend?" said the widow, "but you are irritated, annoyed, and your fine mind is, for the time, obscured. Hear me, at least. The king has complained to me of the insipidity of his new

favourite, he has compared her with your wit, your eloquence, your animation, and he said, 'I prefer one hour with her even when she is angry to a day of torpid sunshine with this pretty baby, whom I have made a Duchess to satisfy her vanity. If Athenaïs would spare me her reproaches I would willingly break my chain."

Athenaïs turned suddenly round, and with a new burst of tears threw herself into the arms of Madame de Maintenon.

"Is this true?" she exclaimed, "then Louis is mine again and all is well. Forgive me, dear friend—I wronged you—it is of me then he speaks in those long interviews of which I have been so jealous?"

"Always of you," was the reply, "I have not contradicted him in this caprice of la Fontanges. I felt sure it would pass away, and the result is as I suspected—he is tired of her—write to him, as you know how to write—

express anxiety and affection for Mademoiselle de Blois—that will do no harm. This marriage with the Prince de Conti is his passion at present, entreat an interview and you will see him at your feet."

"My best adviser," said the revived beauty, "it shall be done—how judicious you are. And do you really think her reign is over—it has not been a long one."

"She is not formed to keep him," said de Maintenon, "fear nothing, only restrain your temper, and lay yourself out to entertain him. Offer him one of those fêtes which so much please him—appear yourself in a pastoral character, sing, dance, and show him what resources you have beyond those of the mere statue who has stolen him from you—avoid all reproaches, all unkindness. I have represented you to him, as given up to tender regret; let him not suspect that resentment is the paramount feeling."

" What say you to a party at Les Divines ?' continued she. " He wishes to go there incognito—let us persuade him to accompany us after your fête, and let this divert him from his anxiety about the arrival of news from Bavaria. We shall thus engross all his attention, and depend on it the fair intruder who has announced her intention of visiting the abbey of Chelles, will not be hastily disturbed in her devotions."

" Let her be once absent, and I fear not," said Athenaïs, exultingly. " I shall triumph yet."

" Your friend Louvois," said de Maintenon, " rises every day higher and higher in favor with the king. If we had no longer to fear the interference of Pomponne, all your plans would be certain to succeed. I have hopes that his favour is not so well established but that we may yet triumph over him."

" You relieve my heart from every weight," said her friend: and the re-united rivals sat

down amicably side by side to talk over their plans and scheme for their own benefit, and the injury of those whom they considered their adversaries.

"My dear Athenaïs," said de Maintenon, carelessly, "I have wanted to speak to you on a subject which has considerably annoyed me of late. There are strange rumours abroad of a conspiracy in favour of the Dutch, and suspicion has fallen upon some too high to name. Tell me, as a friend, have they ventured to sound you on the subject? I do not hesitate to say that I have not been disregarded in their attempts, and my heart prompts me to ask your advice on the subject."

The colour rose in de Montespan's cheeks for an instant, and then left her deadly pale. She turned away her eyes and made no reply.

"Your silence answers me," said the widow, "they have then great hopes of success. Would that we had the means of convicting

them of such an attempt. If you possessed such, what an opportunity of triumphing over your rival, and proving to Louis the folly of neglecting one whose mind is so superior to the child with whom he has delighted to toy."

"What do you *know* of my participation in this business, Scarron?" said de Montespan, "for I see you suspect I have some—be candid with me, and I will tell you all."

"Then listen to me, and act as your judgment shall dictate," replied her friend. "De Rohan is at the head of a powerful party, but his designs are known, and his favourers will not long be able to conceal themselves. If you have any papers destroy them, or give them up to the king, and thus make your peace at once."

"By what means are you informed thus?" asked de Montespan, with agitation.

"You know Vandenenden, the teacher of mathematics?" replied Madame de Maintenon.

"He is the old tutor of Lomaria, who has found out much from him, and knows him to be an agent of de Rohan and others, between Paris and the Low Countries. I have only just gained the information, and as yet no one is aware of the facts but myself. If you will trust those papers to me, which you received yesterday from Madame de Villars, I will take them to the King from you, and thus you will have the credit of putting him on on his guard."

Madame de Montespan turned very pale, and her voice faltered as she said—

"This is very strange. I have indeed received a packet from Madame de Villars, but I thought it a secret from every one."

"Not from me, my dear friend," said the widow, calmly, "but it matters not—do not keep the papers longer in your possession, as they will be dangerous in a few days. There is time now to retrieve imprudence."

De Montespan rose, and without further

hesitation approached the looking-glass, touched the spring, and the little casket was revealed. She took it and placed it in the hands of her friendly rival.

"Do with this as you please," said she, "but bring Louis to my feet once more."

CHAPTER VI.

COURT REVELS.

" Assemblies
Where youth, and cost, and witless bravery keeps."
SHAKSPERE.

DE SEVIGNE arrived in Paris the day before a grand masquerade, which was expected would add lustre to the already fashionable reputation of *Les Divines.*

Their hotel was inferior in dimensions to many in Paris, but its situation on the banks of the river afforded great advantages for fêtes, and the taste with which all the rooms were disposed made the want of space scarcely perceptible.

All the most distinguished of the *beau monde* were to be met with at this new place of resort; nevertheless everyone asked the other how it happened that the Lobenski were so much the rage?—who knew them?—who had introduced them?—all were questions with few answers.

"Are they protected by Madame de Maintenon?" enquired one.

"Are they related to La Fontanges?"

"Are they protegées of de Montespan?"

It sufficed that Les Divines gave splendid parties, invited the best company, amongst whom all contending interests seemed to meet and agree; and unsatisfied curiosity made the mystery piquante and amusing.

"Here is de Sevigné," said de Grammont, as he saw him enter—"perhaps he can enlighten us; for we who have been on the spot and have seen this wonder start up, cannot explain it—he has been away, but it may have been revealed to him by some fairy."

But de Sevigné was lost in surprise: in the

short space of his absence, this fairy palace had sprung to light.

"Let us not weary ourselves with conjectures," said he, "but enjoy the present as it is. Who is yonder figure just entering? He has a fine air—I should swear it was the king if it were permitted to imagine he was here."

"Examine him well," said de Grammont, "and you will find your mistake is not very great; but what a singular idea is that of his mask—see, it has four faces—he turns on all sides and still presents a smiling countenance to the ladies. Heavens how he bows!—can it be any but Lomaria himself."

"Impossible!" said de Sevigné, "I left him in a gloomy dungeon in Auvergne, doing penance for a wife; he could not have reached Paris before me. Yet, see—yonder I'll swear is the king himself, looking on with a smile. A fair lady masked hangs on his arm—the stranger approaches them—he asks her to be his partner. Do my eyes deceive me, or is it not de Montespan herself. This is inexplicable!"

"By no means," returned de Grammont—"the Duchess de la Fontanges is ill and retired to the convent of Chelles. Louis cannot endure sickness or gloom, and while the new beauty is lost sight of for a time, the old flame is revived."

"You tell me wonders," exclaimed de Sevigné—"what changes are effected at court in a few brief days! and how old-fashioned one becomes in that period, buried in the shades of a country place. It is impossible to say how awkward I feel after my cruel visit to le Velay. Felix is ruined; he has married a shrew, whom he neglects in a stupid way; for he has not spirit to come to Paris and enjoy himself. I was never so happy as to escape the chilling influence of those horrible mountains."

"It was confidently reported in Paris that you had thrown yourself into La Trappe," said de Grammont—"and as horsehair and carrots are my aversion, I was shocked to hear it. But is not that, yonder, de Rohan?—he is just re-

turned from Normandy—what makes him look so grave?"

As they spoke they joined their friend de Rohan, who was evidently inclined to avoid them, and as soon as he could shake them off, gliding round to a retired nook, near an open balcony filled with shrubs, he leant over the railing in earnest conversation with one of the Polish ladies.

"Is Vandenenden returned?" was his question. "I must see him to-night."

"He is amongst the masks," was the answer —"the chevalier is now talking to him in yonder recess; and Madame de Villars bade me warn you, that de Montespan is again in favour. You have gone too far, I fear, in trusting her with those papers—a jealous woman is a dangerous ally."

They said no more at that moment, and separated as if they feared to be observed; but from time to time, in the course of the evening, the same groups might be seen conversing

together as if on affairs of moment, that did not appear to be connected with the business of the night, which was only amusement.

The mask with four faces meanwhile had attracted all eyes; he danced in the utmost perfection, every movement was grace, every position a study. His rapidity was extraordinary; keeping perfect time he nevertheless introduced so many ornaments into the figure of the dance he was executing with his fair partner, that she appeared to lose sight of him at every turn, when he was instantly again at her side, and ready to receive the hand she extended. Wherever he whirled, a smiling face was still presented to the eager gazers who flocked round, and it appeared as if by a courteous and rapid action whenever he approached the spot where the king stood, who wrapped in a domino, was easily guessed by the company, he made his bow precisely opposite. When the dance was nearly concluded, as he led his beautiful partner round the circle, suddenly he

raised his arms, holding in large folds a capacious robe, formed of many colours, and richly embroidered with gold and silver, while from its drapery a shower of bouquets were cast in all directions, several garlands falling at the feet of the king.

Universal applause followed this surprise, in the midst of which the masque, bowing on all sides, and continuing to present his agreeable countenance radiant with smiles to all near him, disappeared from the ball-room as suddenly as he had entered.

While every one was engaged in loud encomiums on the skill and gallantry of this performer, a door was suddenly thrown open, musicians heard, a shower of stars appeared to shoot up from the ground and fix themselves in trees grouped round a lawn covered with little temples, in which, lighted by countless lamps, were discovered, merchandize of various kinds, all of the most elegant description, guarded by figures in foreign costumes of every nation.

The temples were soon surrounded and bargains made with the masked sellers, who asked as the price of their articles, some enigma which the buyer was to solve. This occasioned great amusement for some time till attention was called from this entertainment by a sudden and brief darkness which enveloped the whole party by the disappearance of all the lamps at a signal of the music which at that moment represented a great crash. In an incredibly short space a new scene rose on the old one, the temples were gone, and rugged rocks supplied their place, in which were cells, each occupied by a sybil prepared to reveal to the curious passages of their future life. A brilliant moon lighted the whole space and a cataract in the centre, sparkled and foamed in its beams.

The mania for fortune-telling which, at this period, absorbed all others, made this a peculiarly pleasant episode in the evening, and it was almost with regret that the usually welcome announcement of supper was heard.

This, however, proved quite as charming and as novel in its way as the rest. The viands were of the most costly description, and served with the utmost taste; the attendants were habited as fairies, and a motion of their wands produced every new dish, as if by magic, from a concealed recess; not one of the numerous guests appeared to be neglected, and the repast concluded to the satisfaction of all.

Dancing was now resumed with additional vigour, and a ridiculous scene, unpremeditated as it was laughable, added to the hilarity of the guests.

A young gentleman from Alsace, animated with the wine he had taken, and encouraged by the applause bestowed on the successful dancer with the four masks, was anxious to emulate his fame, and having procured an introduction to a lady stood up, declaring his capability to perform a minuet in a style able to efface the glories of the unknown.

Scarcely had he made his first bow when he became disconcerted; his first step was out of time. The company pressed forward, some encouraging, some ridiculing him; he advanced, he retreated, still always either before or after the music, his partner was annoyed but continued her part admirably; by degrees he got worse and worse, endeavoured to repair his errors by assuming a pompous air, and gestures of extreme affectation; he mistook the applause now showered on him for approbation and grew more absurd every instant, till at length, the king, who stood in the circle, could contain his risibility no longer, and the signal once given, a general confusion of laughter, clapping of hands, bravos, and exclamations followed, till, stunned with the noise, and confused with his mistakes, the luckless debutant was forced to make a precipitate retreat, leaving his partner overwhelmed with vexation, standing in the centre of the room. She was young and pretty,

and the king, feeling that he had himself contributed to her embarrassment, stepped forward, and led her to a seat, with a gallantry which atoned for her previous mortification, and restored the gaiety of her friends and relations, the only persons present who had not enjoyed the scene.

While the king was in the act of making his bow, a mask stepped suddenly up to him and whispered something in his ear. He started with pleased surprise, and hastily taking the arm of the person who had accosted him, walked away, and was presently lost amongst the crowd of maskers. Madame de Maintenon at the same moment rose from her seat, after making a signal to a person near her, and almost as quickly as the king, she had left the ball. The guests soon afterwards dispersed, all highly pleased with the entertainment, which was pronounced almost equal to those at Marly, or St. Germain, on a miniature scale.

Meantime the givers of the fête were perhaps the least observed of any persons there, nor did they appear to desire to attract much attention to themselves. The two ladies sat together, with a small circle of apparently intimate friends near them, to whom they conversed in a foreign language, totally unintelligible to all in their saloons; but their apparent wit and gaiety made them fill a space in the entertainment, which seemed to give sufficient satisfaction to all. Their costumes were peculiarly splendid, and the jewels they wore of great price.

When all the guests had departed, this circle still remained, and their animated conversation was thus continued—

"We have triumphed to-night more than ever," said one of the Polish ladies, who might have been recognised by those who had seen her in a different situation as Madame de Rouville—"the mask of four faces was

beautifully imagined. How did the tables go on ?"

"We have made great gains during the week," answered one of the party, "and in spite of all this expense, the sums we have realized equal all expectation. If this last we shall all be emperors."

"Of course it will last," answered La Voisin, "and by Lomaria's means our success is likely to be secured in the highest quarter. He is now with the widow Scarron, to announce the arrival of the courier from Bavaria. The king you saw quitted the ball directly he was summoned. You delivered the message well, Petit Pierre, he will of course immediately go to her apartments. The minister Pomponne is away, and she and Colbert will have it all their own way. If Pomponne were once disgraced, we should stand in an easier position. He is too honest, and the other day expressed some doubts of us."

"Fear not," replied de Rouville, "my hopes

are never deceived in Lomaria: he will take proper measures."

"Ninon, I hear, is offended," said la Voisin, "What can we do to propitiate her? She is in love with Lomaria, and his absence in Auvergne has not pleased her. She has suspicions of us, and as she professes honesty, we are not secure—she has too much cunning even for me, I confess. We must secure her by some means."

"This shall be looked to," replied de Rouville, "When does Madame Arnoul arrive?"

"She will be here probably to-night," answered the other. "The widow Scarron has much to communicate with her old friend, and many schemes to plan—if the Queen died, as there is some reason to expect, her star would indeed rise high: there is but that between her and the throne. She already rules Louis as she did the old buffoon, whom she used to ridicule so well to us, while he thought she adored him. Oh! she is a great character, and carries

out all her plans so well that she actually appears the saint she would seem."

"D'Aubigné, her brother, could tell another tale, as he has often told," said de Rouville. "we miss him much, but he will arrive no doubt with Madame Arnoul."

"I know not how she will like that," said la Voisin; "for his imprudence is such that he would endanger all; he publicly talks of his sister's former life, and it is only by heavy bribes that he can be made to keep his unruly tongue quiet."

"He is the great thorn in her side," said de Rouville, "until she gets him in her power she will not feel safe. He will come inopportunely at this moment in her mind, after she had thought him safe in Spain."

"If Colbert comes in, she will give him a place, and send him as far from Paris as she can," added la Voisin. "But how is this?—de Montespan seems in favour again—she is in our

power, or I should tremble for de Rohan's scheme, of which she knows too much."

"As long as the widow Scarron is kept in ignorance, we are safe," said le Sage, who was one of the party—"and Lomaria has undertaken to deceive her."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEVOTEE.

"Please it your grace, there is a messenger
That stays to bear my letters to my friends,
So I am going to deliver them."

SHAKSPERE.

WHILE her character and her plans were being thus discussed, Madame de Maintenon had reached her apartments at the Tuileries, and was closeted with the person who had exhibited four faces at the ball, and who was indeed, as de Grammont's practised eye had detected, Lomaria himself.

"Your appearance did indeed surprise me,"

said she, "I thought you still in Auvergne with your heiress, and much as I stood in need of your advice, I did not expect to avail myself of it so soon."

"My scouts are swift," replied Lomaria, "and my plan well laid—the courier from Bavaria is a spy of de Rouville's fraternity, my old nurse is trusty, and instead of the letters being delivered to Monsieur de Pomponne exclusively, Louvois will have the first intelligence. While de Pomponne, good, easy man is quietly awaiting the dispatches, and meantime amuses himself amongst his orange trees, he little imagines there is so clever a plot laid to supersede him. Observe how we should act. The king will tell you that the courier is arrived, he does not yet know of Pomponne's absence; he has sent for him, in vain of course, and for his secretary, who alone can read the cipher. I persuaded the latter to go to-night to the opera, and no one knows where to find him. This will cause plenty of delay, and the

king will get impatient. Then you can introduce me—I will produce the letters to Louvois, whom I have already apprised to be on the spot when called for. All that Louis desires to know will be found in these letters, and the dispatches are a blank after them which will not be worth looking at. Louvois and Colbert, though foes in other points, have joined issue to defeat the hated minister for foreign affairs, who being the only honest man in power, moral besides, it is absolutely necessary we should get out of the way, or disclosures of the most inconvenient kind may ensue."

"Your promptness is everything to us," said the widow, "I felt sure I could rely on you: we shall defeat Pomponne without difficulty now. Colbert will ask no questions, and all will go well. But hark!—see—the day is breaking—the king will be here almost immediately, alas! I have need of your wit to support me under the infliction of these tedious interviews, with the most tedious and exacting

of men. He inflicts all his ennui on me, and if it were not for the novelty of this devotion, which I am bringing into fashion, my task would be hard to keep him in good humour. I am, however, sufficiently wearied, and half repent the part I have undertaken. The king positively keeps me a prisoner, he is never out of my chamber, I am obliged to rise at five o'clock to write to my friends; he already begins to tire of la Fontanges. I thought her beauty would relieve me a little more."

Lomaria smiled. "She is a fool," said he, "a mere fool, and he does not love her because he is not entertained—even the fury of Montespan, but that it has lasted too long, is more calculated to attract him. Her reign will be very short, but yours, best of friends, will be long and secure."

"I know it," answered she. "I have no fears now, my empire is too positive. I only wait for a few inevitable events, and then I shall be indeed supreme; but La Voisin, my

kind and useful friend, goes on well in her plans!"

"Nothing can succeed better," answered Lomaria, "she has enlisted all the *mauvais sujets* in Paris on your side—you have only to name those who are inimical to you and they are our victims. La Fontange has visited the den, and has much enriched our coffers. Thanks to this bank I have no occasion to apply to the niggardly lady of Nevet; and I thus, with her, pass for a reformed character—ha! ha! reformed in what? I, who fear nothing, believe in nothing, love nothing, and detest the world."

"The world, however, you love enough to enslave," said de Maintenon, "it is the only use to be made of it. But now for the affair of de Rohan. You tell me the emperor vacillates—if so he has no chance; for England is so doubly bribed that she will not stir to help the Dutch: the plot must fail, and we must betray it in time. I knew de Montespan would do it

as soon as she returned to Louis's favour, and have made a merit of advising her. It shall now be my act, and thus I gain credit more than ever. How can I thank you for thus aiding me?"

"You owe me none," replied Lomaria, smiling. "I see plainly de Rohan is not the man to carry on such a plot, he is too timid, and trusts too many. Old Vandenenden was not a Jesuit for nothing: as soon as he saw how things were going, he gave me information, and as you paid him better than de Rohan, of course you were best served. There will not be too much enquiry, for the Duke de Bourbon is too far implicated. My friend de Rohan and Traumont will of course suffer, and all will be safe."

"I will bide my time to let Louis into the secret," said the widow—"as yet Louvois suspects nothing, but Pomponne is too acute, and already is seeking for troops. If he had made me his friend he need not seek long, but he

braves me, and shall lose his place. But hark! I hear the king's step—retire till he leaves me again in peace."

Madame de Maintenon, after having dismissed her guest, prepared herself to receive the visit of the king, for which she anxiously looked. "He has some secret uneasiness," said she, "that he dares not communicate to others; this is as I would have it. He comes by degrees into the net I have laid for him, and every day he becomes more and more in my power, even by the very acts which seem to make my task more difficult. These constant jealousies which surround him drive him to me for consolation, and he seeks it of me because he is sure to meet with no reproaches. I can always send him away satisfied, and he is sure to return whenever his troubles recur. The farce of love has been two often played to him—that of disinterested friendship answers much better.

Madame de Maintenon placed herself at her

prie dieu, and cast her eyes apparently towards heaven, but in the direction to which they turned, she could perceive the approach of him on whom all her views were built; and she really uttered a prayer, from habit, as she observed him advancing along the retired alley of orange trees which led to her apartments.

He entered with a languid step, and seated himself whilst she finished her devotions, which she did not permit his presence to interrupt immediately. When she rose from her knees he advanced to meet her.

"My dear friend," said he, "how peaceful and calm do I always find you! Would that I were not altogether a stranger to these tranquil pleasures in which you pass your existence. The turmoil of the court bewilders and fatigues me. I long for rest, and cannot hope to find it."

"No, sire," said the devotee, with a smile, "rest is for the obscure and humble—action for the exalted. It is enough that those who

are lowly utter prayers, and breathe aspirations for the welfare of those whom heaven has placed so high. It is the part of the great to endure the evils of their position, without murmuring—content in dispensing blessings around, even though they suffer in the midst of the power granted them. I cannot pity you, sire, my admiration of your qualities forbids it, but would that I could afford one moment's ease to your mind when it would unbend from care."

"You do so, dear friend," said the king pensively, "in your society I find that quiet which I seek in vain elsewhere. Montespan is become a perfect fury, she annoys me to death, her reproaches, her anger, her bitter sayings are little calculated to gain the end she desires."

"Your majesty must forgive her," said Madame de Maintenon sighing, "her faults arise from too much affection, ill-regulated I own, and more passionate than prudent; al-

though I am myself a stranger to feelings such as hers, I pity their effects."

"You are ever generous and forgiving," said Louis, "but the queen—her sadness distresses and reproaches me still more."

"The queen, "replied Maintenon, "is a pattern of goodness and virtue, she is worthy to love you, but why should you grieve; our attachments are involuntary, and if your heart, Sire, cannot answer to her love, you cannot be to blame."

"No," said he, somewhat relieved, "we cannot control our likings, and mine, I am sorry to say, are arbitrary and independent of myself."

"Alas! dear Sire," said de Maintenon, "of what consequence are any of these things in the great account, the weaknesses of our nature are all parts of our imperfect state, it is in vain to sorrow over them. Heaven, which calls us to its delights, has plenteous store of indulgence for these petty frailties—believe me a great

monarch like yourself, unrivalled in glory, in goodness, as in all human graces, is looked upon by heaven with favour—but heaven will not be neglected by you—you are worthy of its grace and have only to believe that to be worth gaining. Have you confessed to the good father la Chaise lately, dear Sire?"

"You remind me, sweet friend," said Louis, pleased with the new form of flattery adopted, "that I have much neglected the god father, I will see him this very day, my mind will be much relieved by confession. By the bye, are you not shocked at the ignorance and impiety of my courtiers—you, who are an angel yourself! think of de Grammont the other day, when I made him read the Pater Noster which he assured me he had never heard, he exclaimed that it was worthy of Racine and asked me who wrote it."

"Madame de Maintenon crossed herself and bowed her head at the same time, to conceal a lurking smile which she did not, nevertheless,

wish should be totally unobserved, as she saw that the king was more amused than shocked at the anecdote he related.

"I fear there is but little devotion in my Court," he continued, "for only yesterday when I went to mass I was amazed to find the chapel deserted, not one of my beautiful devotees there."

"I asked Brissac the reason," rejoined Madame de Maintenon. "for I was surprised also. Would you like to hear how it happened?"

"Certainly," said Louis, who saw by the arch glance of his friend's eye that something amusing was likely to follow.

"The truth is, Sire" continued she, "these fair dames who live but in your sight, cannot pray without you. When Brissac first posted the guard, the tribunes were filled to overflowing, every place was complete, and expectation was at its height. He was resolved to play them a trick, and returning in a few

minutes, said, loud enough to be heard, 'Soldiers, you may all retire; the king will not come to-day.' Scarcely was the word said, than one by one, every candle was extinguished, the rustle of silk was heard, and presently the chapel was empty. When your majesty was really coming, Brissac, who was on the watch, readily replaced the guards, and thus you found no ladies to receive you."

The king laughed heartily, and was evidently more pleased at the compliment paid him, than at the want of devotion he complained of.

"These infidel Protestants," said he, "continue to give me great vexation. Their impiety and restlessness are every day becoming manifest; and these Jansenists, father Letellier informs me, are becoming more and more intrusive. I must clear the kingdom of them. There is no Christianity but amongst the order of Jesuits."

Madame de Maintenon again crossed herself, and as she bent her head, was really careful

to hide the bitter smile which rose to her lip.

"I have a little present for you, Sire" said she, "a ring blessed at the shrine of our blessed Lady of Liesse—wear it, I entreat, for her sake, and, accompanied by pious thoughts and abstinence for a day, you will find your mind singularly relieved."

"Do you think it absolutely requisite," asked Louis smiling, "that my abstinence should begin immediately? This week I give a series of fêtes on my daughter's marriage, and it would strangely inconvenience me."

"I did not mean to name the time," replied the false devotee. "I merely rely on your majesty to attend to the fact—a great monarch like you must necessarily be exempt from much which would be required of a mere subject; but I, dear Sire, can fast and pray for you, and be assured it shall be done with zeal."

"I doubt it not," said Louis pressing her hand. "I can always rely on you in every

emergency. Just now I am greatly at a loss. The courier from Bavaria is arrived, and though I have sent for Pomponne, to meet me here instantly, he still delays."

"He is not in Paris, Sire," said the devotee, "he left yesterday for his country place, where he has a company of friends, and does not purpose to return for several days."

"How!" cried Louis angrily, "leave Paris just when the news which so much interests me was expected! I tell you the dispatches are arrived, and I must know their contents this very instant."

"But is there any one who can decipher them, Sire?" asked she with interest.

"Perdition on him—no—I fear not," exclaimed the king, walking furiously up and down the room, "dolt that he is, parading in his allées, and leaving the fate of France in uncertainty! but he shall lose his place—I will not be thus carelessly served. If I could only find any one capable—where is Colbert? where

is Louvois? let them be sent for." So saying he rang a bell furiously, and gave orders that the two ministers should be immediately sent for.

Madame de Maintenon allowed this burst of passion to subside, and then said calmly—

"I think in this business I can help your majesty, for but a moment since one of my friends arrived, who is the bearer of letters to M. de Louvois. If you would condescend to see him, he might perhaps be able to throw some light on this subject."

"You are my good genius in all things," said Louis, stopping short, and becoming suddenly calm. "Let your friend be sent for—who is he?"

"Most opportunely he arrived only yesterday from a journey," answered she, "and your majesty, I think, has already honoured him by your notice—it is the young Breton Lomaria, who dances in such perfection."

"Did I not see him this very night in a strange four-sided mask?" asked Louis, eagerly.

"Your majesty cannot be deceived," said the widow, smiling, "though no one else suspected him; he has just confessed it to me, though I was far from having recognised him—it is so easy to impose on me! Lomaria, I feel certain, can afford assistance in this case: he is at this very moment close by. Shall he be called in?"

"Certainly," exclaimed the king, "this is indeed fortunate. Now my old careless minister, we will outwit you; you shall dearly regret your visit to the shades of Pomponne, where you may stay long enough to recruit your health, which has suffered from such zealous attention to business."

Madame de Maintenon retired for a moment, and as she returned, ushering in Lomaria, the the two ministers were announced. Louis with a few words only of explanation, received the letters for Louvois, which he had the satisfaction of seeing opened in his presence, and obtained by this means all the information he desired.

The triumph of the enemies of the foreign minister was complete. Lomaria's credit was established, and the dangerous foe to evil schemes, whom de Maintenon's band dreaded, was for some time removed from office, the king, having, from impatience and caprice, sacrificed the interests of an old and tried friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERPLEXITY.

"Myself am one made privy to the plot."
SHAKSPERE.

THE queen meanwhile, who was much attached to Angelique de Meri, felt her absence extremely, and when she found that her flight to Auvergne had been productive of no good as far as regarded her separation from Lomaria, she resolved no longer to deprive herself of her society. Soon after the return of her lover to Paris, Angelique, therefore, received a com-

mand to return, which she did the less unwillingly as she had now altogether changed her opinion of Lomaria's character, and hoped so to represent it to her royal mistress that she would see no cause to oppose the addresses he offered her. The château of Mezeraye had become anything but a pleasant sojourn, for the gloom of Madeleine's character had communicated itself to all around, and she appeared indifferent to everything but her own sorrows over which she brooded incessantly. The friends, therefore, parted with little regret, and the Countess was left to her unhappiness, while the young heiress seemed propelled towards the fate which appeared to await her without any effort of her own.

The arts of Madame de Maintenon had at last succeeded, and the queen had by degrees been led to consider her in the light of a friend to the real interests of the king, and in no manner on the same footing as his other favourites. Her apparent piety, meekness, and propriety

succeeded in deceiving this amiable princess, who, judging by her own heart, could not but give credit to the existence of good in that of others. The continued praises of the king, and his evident desire that she should appreciate the virtues he so lauded weighed much with her, and an opportunity once offorded her, the widow Scarron profited by it to the utmost.

Lomaria had, by his superior tact, spirit, talent, and management, made himself remarked by Louis on more than one occasion, and his ancient intimacy with Madame Scarron, begun when he was a mere boy at the hotel d'Albret, and renewed on his re-appearance at court after a long interval, was cemented by services in which she saw fit to employ him, and which he willingly performed, each having their own ends in view.

His character was represented in such a light to the queen by his zealous friend, that Angelique found her very ready to listen to her own opinion, and so well did he speed in fact that

he was finally accepted as the affianced husband of her he sought.

It was accordingly settled that as the whole court was to be one scene of festivity, in consequence of the approaching marriage of the king's daughter to the Prince de Conti, the same season should see the heiress the wife of the Marquis de Giverrand. The mother of the bridegroom elect, Madame de Nevers, heard the news of her son's advancement and excellent prospects with joy, and a gleam of hope, in which she had not allowed herself to indulge for many years, dawned upon her; but there were those on her estate who heard the tidings with far different feelings, and all the revengeful character of the Breton nature was roused to wreak on Lomaria vengeance, for a deed for which he imagined in the peopled waste of Paris he could never be called upon to atone.

Two men left their cabins in Giverrand soon after the arrival of the news of their young lord's intended marriage; they asked no leave

to absent themselves, and it was thought they were actuated by curiosity to witness the ceremony, and had sought the far off capital with no other intentions. Their motives were afterwards better known.

Madame de Maintenon now began to see that her credit with Louis was of such a nature that a trifle could not destroy it, and as she looked around her, she reflected on the plans and schemes which she had adopted, and the engines she had set at work—she felt as one may feel who has evoked a fearful power, which it requires equal art to destroy.

Many of her ends had been gained by the means she had employed, and she saw plainly that it would now be safer for her to work by herself than to depend on others: but how to disperse the crowd of dangerous characters, which her encouragement had drawn to Paris; and how to do away with their influence, now that she had availed herself of their agency as much as she required? Her decision was

prompt and wise: she sent for Lomaria, and consulted him on the subject. To him she professed her intention of betraying the secret society which was growing too powerful. She found him ready to enter into her views altogether.

"My object," said he, "is gained. I am to make Angelique my wife in a few days. I have secured sufficient funds for the present—and added to this I begin to weary of this amusement. But how will you contrive to betray the society with due safety to ourselves?" asked he.

"I will at once," said she, "inform the king of my suspicions. I must do so without delay, for Louvois I find has already become suspicious: my brother has told me that he is aware of more than we imagined. I must be beforehand with him, and when he brings the information to Louis, it must be already known. It will be easy at once to arrest La Voisin and the rest; and as for their revelations, they must be well regulated."

"I have no fears for myself," said Lomaria, "for this affair of de Rohan's, which is in my keeping, can at any time secure me. I have only to betray all I know of the plot, and I win thanks from the king, or any minister to whom I choose to tell my secret. We will watch our opportunity, and not act until we see our way clear. The great art is not only to do a thing well, but to choose the propitious moment in which to render it of advantage."

Unsuspicious of the subtle enemy in their camp, the parties known as Les Divines, otherwise the sisters Lubinskà, otherwise Les Amis, continued to live in a style of luxury and splendour hitherto confined to the very highest classes; and their entertainments were as much frequented as ever. It was more than suspected that the play at their hotel was conducted on principles far from fair; but so much money was won by the courtiers, and so many rich young men from the country daily became

their prey, that the fashion of patronising the Polish strangers was not allowed to drop.

While they sustained their characters at the court end of the town, as ladies of rank, La Voisin and de Rouville had not abandoned their occult traffic in the Rue de Fleury. At certain hours named, audiences were given to those of the great ladies, and they were innumerable, who sought them, and their *curiosities*, as their advice was called.

Those who recognised them in their gay saloons were careful not to betray their knowledge, and the secret was better kept than most such mysteries are.

Nevertheless there were some persons of probity about the Court, who were shocked at the state into which society had fallen, and saw with suspicion the growing celebrity of these supposed foreigners, at whose house so many young men were ruined, and the reputations of so many women of rank injured. The king himself began to lose his relish for the

novelty which had at first amused him, and it was then that his eyes became gradually opened to the probability of deception practised by the gay sisters.

They, for their own parts, were now so elated with success that they began to neglect the caution they had hitherto observed, and one of their most indiscreet acts was their admitting into their society d'Aubigné, the brother of Madame de Maintenon, a man who, possessed of the spirit of curiosity and love of meddling which belonged to his sister, had none of her art or prudence. He had no stability, and though always willing to engage in profligate courses, and participate in mysterious plans and plots, was continually changing his tastes, and quitting one description of knavery for another.

Le Sage, the prime director of the schemes of Les Amis, saw with vexation that d'Aubigné intruded himself into their society, and cautioned La Voisin to conceal from him the

extent of their undertakings; but he was not aware that an intimacy existed between the two, which rendered his advice of no avail.

Meantime the conspiracy of de Rohan had gained ground, and only waited a favorable moment to declare itself. This ill-advised young nobleman, early ruined by his dissipation, had by degrees involved himself in the most dangerous courses, and having ventured all in the success of his scheme to introduce the Dutch into France, conceived himself sure of gaining his end, if he could induce the lower orders of the community of Paris to join his standard.

Le Sage was one of his chief agents: he had formerly been a monk, and being ejected from his convent for incorrigible conduct, threw himself into the worst set in Paris, where his cunning and ingenuity soon placed him at the head of the gangs of murderers, pick-pockets, and infamous characters with which the most depraved capital in Europe teemed to overflowing.

He had gained over to the cause of de Rohan the efficient portion of that numerous body, the beggars of Paris, which, it was calculated, at the time, amounted to no fewer than ten thousand vagabonds of all descriptions—many of them discharged soldiers, accustomed to every sort of rapine and violence. Some of these had temporaryhabitations in the different hospitals, which were being established for the reception of the poor. The Salpêtrière and Bicêtre harboured as many traitors as might be required to supply all the plots conceived by the restless spirits of the age.

Another class of persons was available in most occasions of riot; nor were they forgotten in the arrangements of le Sage. These were the pages and lacqueys belonging to the great houses of Paris, who were entertained for state, and lived dissolute and idle lives. More disturbances were caused by these persons in the streets than by any other set of reprobates: their insolence and daring were undaunted, as

they found protection and countenance from their employers, whenever they were suspected or pursued. So great was the licence and boldness of these people that they hesitated not to commit, publicly, the most furious outrages, and generally escaped free. On one occasion, the carriages of two noblemen having driven against each other in the street, the followers of one of them rushed on those of the other, and a violent contest ensued, in the course of which one of the masters was killed by a lacquey of the adverse party. They went about armed with swords, poniards, pistols, and bludgeons, and waged constant war against order and decency.

The magistrates when applied to were powerless, the excuse being that persons were *too ill paid* to make it worth their while to engage in the police, the pay of each man being but *three sous and a half a day*, as in the good old days of King Jean. It is true, that of late, the evil, having encreased to an alarming extent, an

increase of wages had been *promised*, but so partially performed, owing to the enormous expenditure of the court, that things remained much in the same condition.

The boatmen of Paris were another race, who were generally open to offers, such as de Rohan's agents made, and as they formed a numerous body of able men, their co-operation was not to be despised.

Most of these, the refuse of the people, scattered over Paris, and entering into society, from the highest to the lowest grade, held their midnight meetings in the famous Cour des Miracles; a sanctuary rendered of late fashionable at court, by the ballet introduced by the profligate courtiers, too well acquainted with its mysteries.

When it is said that these abuses, existing as they did at the period of this narrative, were, thanks to the efforts of the minister Colbert, considerably diminished from the height to which they had risen about twenty years before,

some idea may be formed of the state of the capital, and the hideous contrast exhibited between the court and the city.

The severe laws against the Protestant population and the consequent destitution of a great body of industrious persons caused disaffection amongst them, and left them ripe for any movement which offered a chance of bettering their condition.

All these circumstances placed the plot of de Rohan in a promising posture, and he considered that all was safe, and he had but to give the signal to ensure success.

But while the confederacy, in which so many agents were employed, was busily at work, and all seemed to smile upon their undertakings, a secret and powerful enemy had risen against them whose power was higher than they could resist.

The minister Louvois, when he had combined with Colbert to ensure the defeat of M. de Pomponne, the minister for foreign affairs, had

omitted to secure from Louis his own appointment as his successor—great, therefore, was his mortification when he found that Colbert had acted with greater caution, and that his brother Colbert de Croissy had instantly replaced the disgraced nobleman. When he discovered this his rage knew no bounds, and he was resolved to indulge in some signal revenge. He repaired instantly to his friend, Madame de Montespan whom he usually enlisted in his cause. He found her in a calmer mood than he had of late been accustomed to see, but when he informed her of his own disappointment she entered into his views with her usual zeal.

"Madame Scarron has deceived us," said he, "her agent, Lomaria, while he pretended to place power in my hands, by means of those important letters from Bavaria, was acting underhand for Colbert. I have certain information of this, and as I know by what means he was enabled to assist me, so can I betray that means, and strange and fearful may be the dis-

closures I can make, involving some of the highest in the land. Les Amis, or Les Divines call them as they will, wear no mask for me."

"How," said de Montespan anxiously, "do you really mean that these Polish women are impostors?"

"They are no other," said he, "I have known it long, but it did not suit me to do so. La Voisin and de Rouville have, however, overacted their parts; through the imprudence of d'Aubigné, who can never cease from chattering, I have found out all. They are old friends of the widow Scarron's early days—bound to her for old mutual services—they act under her auspcies, and as I know her little friendly feeling towards me I shall not spare her. The execution of Brinvilliers has not put an end to sorcerers or poisoning, but this time I will act with promptitude, and this nest of hornets shall be swept away."

"Louvois," cried de Montespan, "hear me; be careful how you pursue these people, some

disclosures might be dangerous to your best friends—Madame Scarron knows too much—attack her not or we are both in danger.

"Fear not, dear madam," said the minister, "I will keep clear of all accusations that may involve my friends; but I have a rich list of those who shall suffer. What say you to the fair de Soissons—you would not screen her?"

"No, no," cried Montespan, "let her be made the scorn and horror of all Europe, as she deserves to be. I shall rejoice in it—tell me who else."

Louvois then produced for her edification a list of names, whose importance made her start. He professed his determination to attack them all, and weed the court of all who were dangerous to his plans.

"The designs," he continued, "of this Lomaria, favourite as he is, are known to me—a well-organised conspiracy is at this moment going on in Normandy and Brittany. It is from his own people, by whom he is detested,

that I have obtained certain information that he belongs to a plot, headed by Louis de Rohan, in favour of the Dutch. I have papers which will criminate them all, which I only wait my opportunity to lay before the king, who is then completely in my power, and will grant whatever I require."

"Be cautious, however, in this affair," said Montespan, timidly. "Would I had never gone to those women to seek a destiny, which your superior prescience could have better told me."

"Oh, regret it not," cried he, "your name shall never appear, or if it does, it will only seem that you visited them for fashion's sake, as all the Court has done. The sudden deaths of so many persons lately has caused surprise and fear, and enquiry is already on foot, which must bring to light the author of these events, which are too strange to be accidental. Above all," he added, "my old enemy and yours—de Luxembourg, shall not be forgotten. Some

of la Voisin's band are in my pay, and I have enough evidence to destroy him, were he ten times a marshal of France."

"What are the designs of this artful Scarron, Louvois?" said Madame de Montespan. "She refuses all the matches proposed to her. I had set my heart on her marrying the old Duke de Villars, and she has positively refused. I should thus have got rid of her altogether, instead of which her power over Louis increases every day, while mine, alas, diminishes!"

"Do not say or think so," said Louvois, gallantly, "the king has not yet become insensible to perfect beauty, or broken the spell woven by the 'wit of Mortemart,' which none have ever yet been able to resist. De Fontanges is dangerously ill, and Louis hates sick women."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MONTS DORES.

"The lovers sat devising how to give more feathers to the wings of Time."

ARCADIA.

"Thy heavenly face is my astronomy."

IBID.

IT is now necessary that we should return to some of the characters in this story, which have been lost sight of for a time, and introduce our readers to scenes of a totally opposite character. Scenes of happiness and repose, such as were not dreamed of by the restless and turbulent denizens of the great city, where vice and pro-

fligacy, extravagance and wickedness of every sort flourished in full luxuriance.

Whether there exists less real crime amidst the quiet retreats of rustic life, whether the same deception, art, selfishness, and iniquity, may not be found there under another aspect, is a question experience must answer.

At present, nothing but beauty, calm content, and simple enjoyment present themselves to our view.

In the least frequented, and wildest part of the savage region of the Monts Dores there exists a valley, hemmed in with rocks; a spring of mineral water, at that time resorted to only by the peasantry of the neighbourhood, and looked upon as an object little less than miraculous from the cures it was said to have effected, bubbled up from a fountain amongst the clefts of the mountain which rose above the rest of those which surrounded it. Dark woods of pine crowned the summits—extensive lakes lay bosomed midway amidst the lower hills of the

long range; here and there a small village with the pointed spires, or square tower of its church, or the embowered turrets of a convent of bare-footed Carmelites, broke the waste of solitude which spread for leagues. Physicians had not then discovered the healing properties of the abounding springs, and it was rare that strangers sought that region, placed as it was much out of any direct route;—occasionally a traveller going to Clermont would deviate from his way to visit its beauties, but such an event there were few to notice, and the extreme seclusion did not invite to stay long amongst the shades. Even then some learned monk, from a convent near, would seek in those dells for secrets which he judged nature there concealed, and mighty and wondrous were the mysteries revealed to him. Numerous were the legends attached to this spot, and superstition had here a wide range.

Nothing that imagination could frame, surpassed the beauty of some of the nooks in

these mountains, and there was one where a small cottage stood by the side of a brawling brook, into which leaped a bright cascade from a ledge of rock above, which seemed more inviting than all the rest. Here lived a young couple, who appeared to exist alone for each other, and who must indeed have been singularly attached thus to shut themselves out from the world, and be content never to gaze on a human face beyond their retreat. It was true that occasionally during the summer months, which they had passed there, they had visited the little church of Latour; and the aged priest had been surprised to observe, amongst his congregation, two strangers, of appearance so unlike the peasant population, who generally came there to offer up their devotions.

Louis Bernard and his beautiful wife, Gabrielle, were the strangers who had thus secluded themselves. They had quitted the inn, at Seignelay, which Bernard had given

up without claiming payment, to their former servant, Jacques, who was about to be married; and as the young artist represented to his wife that he could now live without that occupation, by which he was losing rather than gaining, she had made no objection to quitting it, though she could not help regretting that she could no longer visit the grave of her mother, over which she had been accustomed to strew flowers, and say prayers. Madame Collard had become tired of the monotony of the country, and, annoyed to find all her schemes abortive, had ceased to feel much interest in her niece. Bernard, who had apparently taken a dislike to her, had written to his wife to say she must be got rid of before his return home, and immediately after her departure he executed the plan he had conceived of parting with the inn. Gabrielle was rather distressed that he objected to her informing her aunt of their new place of abode.

"My dear Gabrielle," said he, "what can be

the use of telling her, she will only be teasing us with an unexpected visit at some inconvenient time, and bring about us a host of strangers from Paris, such as worried us before. If ever we are rich enough to go and get tired enough of each other to wish to quit our solitude, we will go to Paris and see her."

"Then I am sure we shall not meet again in a hurry," said Gabrielle, "for we shall never be tired of this fairy place, which is all the fondest imagination could desire; and as for being rich enough, that I neither wish nor see the probability of."

"When our stock of money is exhausted you know," said Bernard, "I have only to take my portfolio, and shall always find a sale for my pictures in some great town, which will set us up again."

"But," replied Gabrielle, "that is what I dread—while we are together I never dream of anything like danger or sorrow—but the moment you are absent visions of the most

fearful nature come over my mind. I shall never forget the misery I was in at Seignelay, when you left me so abruptly, terrified after all at a shadow, for those creditors whom you feared never came to molest us. I thought at that time that all our happiness was at an end, but I have long since ceased to be afraid: but then, dear Bernard, you have not left me since. I fear I should have the same terrors whenever you are obliged to go from me, though but for a few days."

"That misfortune shall occur as seldom as possible, my beloved," replied Bernard, tenderly, "for my mind is never tranquil but when I am with you. I have read of two lovers who, like us, were all in all to each other, whom fortune had cast on a desert island, where they lived in such bliss as we are now realising. Their fate was, however sad—if it can be called so—that they perished together."

"No," exclaimed Gabrielle, "it must be

called happy—next to living united must be the joy of dying together. I have no other wish or hope, and I am sure my thoughts are but the reflection of your own. How much do I owe you, dearest Louis? You have informed my mind, which was before a blank—you have cultivated my taste, till I am now nearly as good an artist as you—you have taught me poetry, and tell me, have I not learnt readily the airs your lip has breathed for me—even as the young birds learn quickly the liquid notes their parents utter? But you must relate to me the story of these lovers. Seated beside our cascade, will it not be sweet to dwell on this tale of constancy and suffering, and rejoice that fortune has been so much more kind to us."

It was during the long evenings of summer, in this delicious valley, that Bernard recounted to his listening wife the history of the voyage of the Sea Star.

CHAPTER X.

THE VOYAGE OF THE SEA STAR.

" Oh, for some fair Formosa, such as he,
The young Jew, fabled of, in the Indian sea,
By nothing but its name of beauty known,
And which Queen Fancy might make all her own.
Her fairy kingdom, take its people, lands,
And tenements into her own bright hands,
And make, at least, one earthly corner fit
For love to dwell in, pure and exquisite."

MOORE.

It was in the spring of 1528 that two tall ships were lying in the offing of the ancient port of St. Lucar de Barrameda, at the mouth of the river Guadalquiver; the sails were bent, and

expectation beamed on the countenances of all who waited the arrival of the governor of a colony yet unconquered, and indeed, but barely known. With the Spaniards, to hear was to decide—to see was to obtain—and they deemed the far off province in the new world of Columbus as completely their own, as if they were already reaping the fruits of conquest in the rich display of its wealthy produce.

Amongst those about to embark was a nobleman of ancient family, Don Christoval de Morales, who resolved in the decline of his life to quit his native city of Seville, and extend the dynasty of his illustrious house on the shores of a foreign land.

His patrimonial possessions had once been extensive, and, even now, were sufficient for quietly maintaining the dignity of nobility; but ample as they yet were, the proud descendant of a long line of grandees imagined them unequal to his exalted rank, and seduced by the flattering hope of acquiring the means

of establishing himself without dispute, the first in riches as in station, he sought and obtained the title of governor of the new found coast of Yucatan, and all the adjacent seas and countries hereafter to be subdued, under his dominion.

A prospect, so alluring to one whose character was compounded of ostentation and avarice, could not be rejected, though the sacrifice of personal comfort, and present wealth, were involved in the remote undertaking. Money, therefore, was raised on his hereditary domains by the sale and mortgage of every thing which could furnish the means of equipment, and two well-formed ships, one called the "Estrella del Mar, or Sea Star," the other "the Fortune," with crews, arms, and every requisite appointment for conquest or negociation were speedily procured. In addition to the hired dependants who were destined to accompany the new made governor, there were many who were led to follow his fortunes from motives, and in situa-

tions, more various. Experienced mariners, well trained soldiers, enterprising sons of *hidalgos*, who doomed otherwise to the cowl, sought an escape from the monotony of a religious life in more stirring scenes, and lastly, the brethren of the frock and sandal, zealous in the propagation of the doctrines of St. Dominic among the unenlightened Indians. These were some of the many who formed the motly throng now assembled on the banks of the Guadalquiver, under the command of the Marquis de Morales.

The season was not so far advanced as to render travelling by daylight, either fatiguing or unpleasant; and the noonday sun beamed upon a splendid cavalcade, which was at length descried approaching the town of St. Lucar, as the arms and burnished accoutrements of the attendant horsemen glittered on the nearest heights, which rise on the high road to Seville.

As the cavalcade approached nearer, the num-

ber and order of the governor's retinue appeared in all their extent. A party of about twenty horsemen, mounted on fleet Andalusian barbs, came gaily prancing in the van. For defensive arms they each wore a light cuirass of flexible mail, and a helmet of burnished steel; while a small target of wicker-work, bound with the hides of bulls slain in the arena, at Seville, and studded with small brass knobs, hung at the saddle bow. Their swords were light, and of the real Toledo steel; and each cavalier wore on his left shoulder a gay-colored mantle, and in his right hand grasped a long and taper lance, to which was affixed a fluttering banderol of crimson silk. Each horseman seemed proudly conscious of the charge which was thus carefully escorted, and which followed immediately in the rear. A large and deep carriage, drawn by six mules, profusely ornamented with emblazonry, and curtained by an embroidered silken hanging at each side, formed the chief object of solicitude and attention. The curtains

were partially withdrawn, and discovered two figures reclining within, one of whom, grave and haughty, with a countenance which, though naturally handsome, was marked by features of inflexible severity, was no less a personage than the Viceroy of Yucatan. His figure was commanding, and his manners, such as beseemed a grandee of Spain, were cold and reserved; and though men might feel themselves compelled to pay respect to the stately looks and proud bearing of the haughty noble, it was a deference unmixed with any sentiment of love.

Far different were the feelings of all who gazed on the female form which was seated by his side: it was that of his daughter, the lovely Inez. A large black veil at present concealed her beautiful features; but it was whispered by day in the Cathedral of Seville, and sung under the windows of the Alcazar, by moonlight, that no fairer face had ever been seen in Andalusia since Cava's beauty brought ruin

and death upon her country and her king. Her figure was tall—its symmetry perfect; her cheek and brow were pale, and the rich tresses of her hair were of the hue of night; but the most fascinating expression of her exquisitely lovely countenance lay, perhaps, in the small coral mouth. Her face, though it bore, at times, a melancholy cast, like your own, my Gabrielle, yet occasionally was lighted up by transient gleams of pleasure: like the brilliant iris we sometimes see for a moment between the sun and wave, it came as brightly, and was alas! as evanescent.

Her dress was of a rich subdued colour, and a crucifix and long rosary of gold were suspended from her neck, as one hand seemed mechanically occupied in counting the beads, though it may be doubted whether her thoughts were altogether fixed on the religious occupation.

Two cavaliers, whose dress denoted them of rank, rode on either side of the carriage; the

one nearest the governor was a man advanced like himself in years, and nearly connected with him by marriage: his name was Don Antonio de Meneses, and he now held the rank of Adelantado, or admiral of the small squadron destined for America—a command soon he hoped to be exchanged, for a more extended sway on the shores for which they were about to sail. The other cavalier, whose situation as he rode close to Dona Inez, betokened his consideration, was a nephew of Don Christoval's, by a deceased brother's side; and, as such, intended by him to sustain the dignities, and inherit the honours of his distinguished ancestry. The more closely to unite their interests, the hand of Inez was to be the guarantee of the intentions of the Marquis, as soon as the maiden had completed her sixteenth year, an event which was yet some six months distant.

Don Gaspar was young and full of the fiery pride, which distinguished the young Castilian

nobles; but the more active energies of his youth relieved in him the great degree of coldness and reserve, which he inherited from his uncle. A close observer might discern that when time should have chilled the ardent inclinations of his spirit, the same repulsive attributes would efface his smile, and settle also on his brow. It was evident that Don Gaspar had hitherto little studied the control of his passions, as the restless glances of his eye, and the contemptuous curl of his lip, bore witness to the little restraint under which he had passed his youth. An air of haughty superiority, and a tone of arrogance, which neither the reserve of his uncle, nor the gentleness of his fair cousin could at all repress, marked him the favoured counterpart of the Marquis, who looked on him as his former self, and the future heir of all his glory, and rendered him still less the being whom Inez, in vain, sighed for, as worthy to link her destiny with his.

Such were the principal characters who formed the group, now leisurely approaching the port from when they were to turn their backs on Spain, and seek a world elsewhere.

In the rear of the carriage rode several armed lackeys, and the major-domo and duena of the establishment followed close behind; the former on horseback, the latter in a litter: a body of horsemen, equipped like those in front, completed the procession.

Though the expeditions which sailed from Spain were numerous, one of such magnificence as this under Don Christoval was of rare occurrence; and the crowd of gazers was proportionably great. In the streets of St. Lucar, therefore, had assembled a greater concourse of spectators than had for a long time been seen in the spacious Plaza. There were the self important dignitaries of the town, both civil and ecclesiastical, earnestly pressing their functions into the service of the great man, and soliciting his gracious notice, while the

more humble part of the community stood aloof from the illustrious presence, as if awed at the near approach of nobility, and sought to gratify their curiosity by surrounding the gay and gallant horsemen, who formed the advance, and closed the line of the distinguished cortège. Here were crowded the sunburnt peasant and muleteer, who boasted himself an old Castilian, without blemish; and close at his side, the swarthier lineaments of him whose ancestors had conquered and lost the soil in which his race was now about to be proscribed and abandoned. The hard working and contemned son of Israel formed the third degree of humanity, equally despised by the two former, though perhaps gazing on the scene before him with a secret consciousness, that to him and his tribe was owing, the whole of the splendid array now marshalled before him.

The greater part of the crowd consisted, however, as it always does, of the fairer sex, and bright were the garments, and brighter

the glances of the dark eyed maids, whose wonder and whose sympathy were excited by the pomp and magnificence, and the probable dangers to which the adventurous band might be exposed.

There was one who mingled with the crowd regardless of the splendour which attracted the attention of all beside; alike indifferent to the vanity, the success and the glory of the enterprise; whose thoughts were centred in one object alone, and that *she* formed a part of it, was to him the only idea that gave interest to the scene. This enthusiast was a young man of about five and twenty years of age. His dress was simple, but such as might well befit the son of an *hidalgo*, and this his appearance and bearing denoted him. He was a stranger in St. Lucar, who, it was said, had been but a few days arrived from Seville. The name and title which he bore were those of Don Jacinto de Lèra; more of his condition was not known.

The marquis and Dona Inez were now as-

sisted from their carriage, and prepared to adjourn to the house of the Alcalde Mayor, till everything should be in readiness for their embarkation. A few necessary orders were given, and the Marquis stood in conversation with Don Antonio, while Inez leant on the arm of Don Gaspar, who endeavoured to excite her curiosity by pointing out the vessels now distinctly visible in the bay. Her eyes followed the direction of his hand, and a train of melancholy thoughts in a short time completely absorbed her attention, and rendered her insensible to the many gallant speeches which it was at present the mood of Don Gaspar to address to her.

While they were thus situated, the stranger already mention disengaged himself from the crowd, and approaching the party unperceived by the two latter made a profound reverence to Don Christoval. The Marquis, not slow to distinguish his dignified and respectful manner,

paused in the conversation with his kinsman, and observed:

"You seem desirous, senor, of addressing yourself here: if so, know that you are in presence of the Viceroy of Yucatan. Is it himself or his admiral, Don Antonio de Meneses, that you seek?"

"I am pleased, my lord," was the reply of the stranger, "to find that I have not erred in supposing it was the Viceroy whom I approached; it is indeed to him that I am anxious to speak, to obtain from him a boon for which I have journeyed far, and have long prayed for the opportunity of demanding."

At the sound of the deep tones of his voice, Dona Inez started and half turned round; for she recognised accents which were not unknown to her ears, and the slight glimpse which she obtained in the action of turning convinced her that the nightly musician, who had for some months appeared beneath the fenestra of her father's palace, and the bravest matador of the

bull fights of Seville were one and the same person.

Don Gaspar, attracted by the movement of Inez, and piqued at finding his gallantry unattended to, turned also, and at the same time with the quick intuition of rivalry, discovered, in Don Jacinto, the cavalier who had more than once excelled him in the tournament and the bull fight. He advanced with Inez, who endeavoured to assume an air of calmness, though an undefinable emotion gave unwonted colour to her cheek, and additional lustre to her eye.

The Marquis replied with courtesy to Don Jacinto.

"Whatever request the Viceroy can grant to a stranger," (laying an emphasis on the term), "consistently with his own dignity, it is not his character to reject: speak, then, senor, that I may know the extent of your wishes."

"I should think," interrupted Don Gaspar, "the young man has forgotten that noblemen

should be approached with somewhat more of ceremony than that which a picador makes his salutation to the arena: if I bethink me aright, it is there that I have oftenest seen this claimant upon the Viceroy's attention."

A hasty and indignant reply seemed to rise to the lips of Don Jacinto, but was as suddenly checked; but his cheek glowed with suppressed resentment. Don Antonio, whose character was conciliating and kind, interposed between the suddenness of the answer by remarking—"You are right, cousin: I remember the cavalier full well in some of the deadliest conflicts I have lately witnessed, and have often noticed his bravery when left alone to exhibit it, and—"

"Enough, my kinsman," said Don Christoval—"I await the senor's request."

"That I am hitherto," said Don Jacinto, "known only to Don Gaspar de Morales, in the sports of warlike recreation is, I confess, my sorrow; yet my name has been heard

where trumpets have been blown for a higher object of renown: that such may again be my lot is the cause why I now address your excellency, whose standard I have sought with the hope of following it to the shores where Pizarro and Almagro are spreading wide the fame of the Spanish arms; and I trust I have not done so in vain. My own sword is all I have to offer in the service, unless a heart devoted to the cause may be esteemed a surer pledge."

"It is well said," exclaimed Don Antonio, "and I willingly add my intercession with the viceroy to favour your suit. Such swords and such hearts are worthy an enterprise so perilous."

"It needs not being further advocated," gravely answered the Marquis, "a Castilian remembers the saying of his fathers, '*El dar es honor y el pedir dolor.*' Senor, you are welcome to join the expedition; make your preparations as speedily as you may—we sail at sunrise."

So saying he gave the signal to move on, and the crowd soon dispersed, leaving Don Jacinto wrapt in astonishment at finding himself suddenly, and with so little difficulty in possession of the dearest object of his hopes.

He had not only now an opportunity of approaching nearer to the idol of his heart, but was even admitted by her father to the enviable privilege. True, he alone was aware of the extent of his daring wishes, and true it was that they existed only with the certainty of being crushed should the Marquis ever discover them. The image of Don Gaspar came also across his mind, and chilled his expectations as he remembered the rumours which named him the destined husband of Inez; but he strove to banish the idea, in the hope that time would interrupt the course of events which man predicts as certain; and he cherished the belief that the devoted attention which he had so long paid to Inez had not been altogether repelled, or deemed entirely undeserving. There was

much for a lover to hope, but there was much also that a prudent man would look upon with a very different eye. When, however, were love and prudence so equally blended as to render either subservient to the other? at least they were not so now, and Don Jacinto gave himself up entirely to the pleasing thoughts with which his present situation inspired him.

The same evening witnessed the embarkation of the governor's family on board the Estrella del Mar; the admiral and his immediate suite embarking in the other vessel, called La Fortuna. Don Jacinto, with only one servant, was amongst those on board the former.

The first streaks of light above the mountains of their native country, announced to the adventurers the last morning which their eyes should behold in Spain, and a fresh breeze springing up from the eastward intimated but too plainly that this enjoyment must speedily be relinquished. The sails were set, the anchor

weighed, and amidst frequent discharges of cannon which were answered by the loud shouts of numerous spectators from the shore, the squadron slowly receded from the Spanish coast.

As the vessels felt the pressure of the canvass, and the freshness of the encreasing breeze, their progress became more rapid, and soon were the minor objects on shore indistinguishable from the deck; the large white buildings, long a prominent landmark, began to lose their identity, and finally a deep blue outline, which gradually grew fainter, was all that marked the spot where the hopes and fears of so many individuals were centred.

Don Christoval entirely absorbed in thoughts of his own dignity, and its probable increase, seemed hardly conscious that he was quitting his native land, and gave his orders with remarkable equanimity. Don Gaspar seemed elate with the idea of speedily reaching the golden shores of America, and like the governor,

indulged in the most glowing dreams of future grandeur: but Inez wept as the mountains of Andalusia faded from her view, and as memory brought back again the scenes of her infancy she could not avoid feeling a pang, as it were, of desolation, in thus abandoning her home, it might be for ever.

Don Jacinto stood upon the deck, and his thoughts, like those of Inez, dwelt on the land they were leaving; it was, however, with a more subdued expression, for as distance enveloped the blue mountains in a dim vapour, his eyes were oftener turned towards the lovely mourner, and it seemed as if her sorrows were the chiefest which excited his sympathy. What would he not have given to have been able to offer her consolation at that moment; but the severe laws of Spanish etiquette, and the rigorous jealousy of behaviour which marked both her father and her cousin, precluded the possibility of his intruding on her notice, without having been formally presented.

When the distant land was no longer visible Inez sought her cabin, and Jacinto saw her no more for the remainder of the day; but towards evening he heard her soft voice, as it accompanied her lute to a low, melancholy air, and could distinguish, as he listened in breathless attention, words to the following effect:—

Linger not, my bark, how vainly
Points thy sail to yonder strand,
Has not Fortune told too plainly
We must seek another land!
There to dwell and there to perish,
Joys departed to deplore,
Absent from the home I cherish,
Beautiful, regretted shore!

Turn, my bark, nor let me longer
Gaze my trembling life away,
Love I feel than fear is stronger,
Early love that bids me stay;
Never can my wand'rings lead me,
Where regret shall wake no more,
Never can a land exceed thee,
Beautiful—abandoned shore!

Yet my heart, one last endeavour,
Weep my eyes, one last adieu!
Thus I lose a joy for ever
Which no wishes can renew.
Trees and mountains fade before me,
Fading to revive no more,
Wreaths of mist are gath'ring o'er thee,
Beautiful—regretted shore!

The Marquis, in the mean time, had made himself acquainted with the name and rank of the new comer, and, satisfied that they were sufficiently noble to authorize his recognizing him on a footing of more equality, he condescended to express himself in terms more gracious than those of the preceding day, and invited him to appear at his own table. He also recommended him to the notice of Don Gaspar, a recommendation which, though not repelled, was received with coldness.

On the following day Dona Inez again appeared, and it was with emotions, which he vainly endeavoured to control, that he underwent a formal introduction to her whom he

had so long secretly sighed for an opportunity of conversing with. Inez herself was agitated, and to any other than the Marquis, their mutual embarrassment might have given cause for observation. He, however, seemed to be aware of no peculiarity in the manner of either, as in measured and formal terms he sanctioned their acquaintance: but Don Gaspar, whose feelings were more acute, and who had little reason to be prepossessed in favour of the stranger, looked on him with suspicion, as on one whom he conceived might in some way become an obstacle in his paths, of either love or ambition.

The idea was at present too vaguely formed to be capable of correct definition, but he promised himself to keep a watchful eye over Don Jacinto, and thwart him in what he already deemed his overweening presumption. By degrees, however, the appearance of a better understanding seemed to prevail amongst the party, and as the confinement of the vessel gradually familiarized them with each other's

society, the necessity for its existence became more apparent.

Jacinto had travelled in several parts of Europe, and could give numerous details of the armies, the possessions, and the interests of Spain—in the low countries and in the Empire, to which Don Christoval condescended, at first, but slightly to attend, but at length habituated himself to listen to more regularly when disposed to unbend from his general reserve. In Inez he found a more interested auditor: to her he spoke of their native land, its traditions, its localities, the chivalry of their fathers, and the splendid ruins of their Moorish foes. He dwelt with enthusiasm on the glorious deeds of the ancient warriors of Spain; he told, in glowing language, of the warlike acts of Roderick de Bivar, the great Cid; of Pelayo, the defender of his country's liberties; he spoke of the valiant exploits of King Ramiro, and his fatal revenge for the loss of Queen Urraca. Of the daring courage of the heroic brothers of

Tavora, and changing to a softer theme he described the romantic adventures of Don Tedon and Ardinga, the beautiful daughter of Aleboazan, king of Lamego.

It was once on the occasion of a continued calm of several days that, in order to relieve the tedium of the time, Jacinto recounted the adventures of Duarte, the Lord of Haro, and his fairy bride.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LORD OF HARO AND HIS FAIRY BRIDE.

A passage relating to the origin of the princely family of Haro, Lords of Biscay, which occurs in the "Popular Mythology of the Middle Ages," suggested the first idea of this poem, though much alteration in the legend was found necessary to render it more fit for poetical purposes. The reader is referred to the very interesting work itself.

The wild boar is rushing thro' thicket and wood,
His eye balls are glaring, his foam is of blood;
The hunter in silence lies watching the foe,
His spear is poised ready, unerring his blow.

Tho' Biscay's bold knights are unmatch'd in the field,
Tho' before their proud banner the Saracens yield,
Tho' gentle in bower, and tho' noble in hall,
Duarte of Haro is Lord of them all.

The chief of his race whose domains spread afar
From the heights of Asturias to lofty Navarre.
What may match his fleet courser, that speeds like the wind,
And leaves not a track of his swiftness behind—
What may match his dark eye that is flashing with light,
And his arm that was ever unconquer'd in fight—
His step so unblenching, his courage so prov'd,
His heart, form'd for softness, that never has loved!

The wild chace is past, and the victor awhile
Casts him down on the green sward, to rest from his toil;
Yon carob, beneath whose broad branches he lies,
The years of its comrade, the eagle, outvies,
The trunk is a shell, lightning-riven and grey,
Whose crest proudly rises and scoffs at decay:
Its time-honour'd arms o'er the forest it throws,
To hail yon grim castle, that frown'd in repose
From the day that it flourish'd alone on the plain,—
And those battlements scowl back a greeting again.

The red sun is setting and leaves a rich glow
On Duarte's dark ringlets and deeply flush'd brow,
His spear is beside him, his hounds crouching near,
When a soft burst of melody breaks on his ear.
Hark! that strain, not so gentle the nightingale's sigh
When he breathes to his mate, who is listening nigh—
Again!—oh how sweet!—and sweet music was made
For ev'nings of summer, for silence and shade!

The bright clouds of sunset are dying away,
The crimson and purple are fading with day,
The mountains of gold and the cities of light
That glow'd in their mirror are melting from sight;

Like the gay hopes that glitter in youth to our view,
And time, stealing time, proves so frail and untrue!
The stars gleam beyond as those fair shadows fly,
And brighter and brighter they rise o'er the sky,—
Alas! when the visions of youth are no more,
What stars can arise and their beauty restore!
The murmur of waters is heard on the gale,
Escaped from the mountains they sweep thro' the vale,
Rich colours are dancing along the light spray,
Like jewels that genii strew in their way.
There's one rock whose white summit day's lingering beam
Illumes with its latest and loveliest gleam,
And a form on its edge like a new fallen star
Stands resplendent in beauty that dazzles afar.
Her garments are shining, with gems and with gold,
And lovely the limbs that those garments enfold;
Her soft hair is waved by the whispering air
Which sighs as it passes a being so fair:
So slender her form, and so radiant her face,
She seems like a spirit that hallows the place;
A perfume, a glory, around her is spread,
And she stands as if earth were too gross for her tread.
"Duarte, I love thee!"—in music she sigh'd—
"I love thee,"—the woods and the echoes replied.

What eyes has youth when before his gaze
Beauty glows with untempered blaze,
More bright than the wings, whose countless numbers
Glittered to dazzle the Prophet's slumbers!—
What ears, when her voice more sweetly swells
Than Paradise wakening all its bells—
What power has youth to turn away,
When such looks and such words are wooing his stay?

The lovely being's smiles awoke
While thus entranced, Duarte spoke:
" Who may look on thy form, who may gaze on thy face,
And dare that Heaven resign?—
Whatever thou art and whatever thy race,
To see thee is to be thine!"

And this was he, whose love to gain
Had sought the fairest maids of Spain,
And this was he whose glance of pride
Saw all unmeet to be his bride;
Who well could flatter, praise, subdue,
But love's soft weakness never knew.
And this was he by fortune blest,
Of wealth, of power, of pomp possest,
To whom tho' many a bliss was known,
Who sighed for something not his own;
Whose treasured vision unfulfill'd,
Each moment of enjoyment chill'd,
Who, loathing joy's unvalued store,
Yet gazed beyond and ask'd for more;
Who now, by one soft glance o'erthrown,
Leaves power, name, state, for love alone!

He forgot his chace, he forgot his fame,
He left the world for her love,
And days and months pass'd on the same,
All delight in that charmed grove.
His palace was their fairy bower,
And none knew where he fled that fated hour.

His kindred the heir of Haro mourn'd,
And mourn'd and hoped in vain,

For time pass'd onwards, ere he returned
To his home and his friends again.
At length he came, and a blooming bride
Was she whose hand he press'd;
Long they lived in pleasure and pride,
Of riches and power possest;
But none could tell whence the lovers came,
And none could that lovely lady name.
Ne'er was a form of so much grace,
Ne'er was seen so fair a face,
Her eyes as the stars of Heaven were bright,
None could gaze on their dazzling light,
When she sang the airs of a land unknown
In music's wildest, sweetest tone.
But none at mass in holy prayer
Might that lovely stranger see,
But none beheld Duarte there
Where was wont his step to be.
For he vow'd when her charmed bower to leave
He won his fairy bride,
No wish her thought might e'er conceive
Should be by him denied.
She said, "the church I come not near,
Nor where choral hymns resound,
A holy name I may not hear,
Nor may tread on holy ground.
But should thy vows forgotten be,
That hour shall be my last with thee."

Where splendour revels with her train
'Midst nobles and ladies high,
And wherever mirth and pleasure reign,
Still were the lovers nigh,

But still through all the festal throng
A whisper'd murmur spread,
As the gay and glittering ranks along
Duarte his lady led;
Each eye her beauty with wonder saw,
But they gazed with envy or gazed with awe.

Her look was calm, her smile was kind,
And she seem'd no care to know;
But in secret would her troubled mind
With sadness overflow.
She felt the world was all too cold,
Tho' bright with gems, tho' shrined in gold,
For one, who had seen, what others but guess,
The sky of unclouded happiness.
She felt to their laugh and dance and song
Never did real joy belong,
There was pomp and pride and luxury's glare,
But grief and hatred and death were there.
Oh! what had she found that her bower had not,
Oh! what that should make that bower forgot!
Of splendour, of pomp, it had ample store,
And she never had tasted pain before.
Save once, when the sigh that love awoke
One moment the charm of her being broke,
But it came, like the last star's vanishing ray,
To make more welcome the coming day.

"Duarte! fly from this world of pain,
Let us haste to our bower of joy again!"
"Nay, gentle love, it may not be,
Tho' this world were sad to thee and me,

Thence our children must not go,
Nor the bower of their fairy mother know:
They must not behold thy happy race,
And mourn in their mortal dwelling place."

"They need not mourn—their days shall flow
Calm as the lake we gaze on now,
Along whose bosom the only shade
Is that by the tamarind's branches made;
Whose waves the skies' blue tints receive
And are fann'd by the perfumed breath of eve.
But storms may come and this lake's calm breast
May lose its transient gleam of rest,
Black and fierce the sky may grow,
And its waters in wild commotion flow:
Such is the change of mortal life,
Calm the harbinger of strife.
But the ceaseless bliss thou know'st full well
Of the land where once thou lov'dst to dwell,
Our children shall live in that land of light,
Nor return to thy world of sorrow and night."
But she urged in vain. Duarte's pride
Was centred in his lovely bride,
The praise of her beauty to him was dear,
And he saw no cause for the struggling tear
That made more brilliant her dewy eyes.
He marvel'd that ever a sigh should rise
Amidst the glory, the pomp and power,
Which waked to bless her each glowing hour.
Perchance he knew as much to prize
The haunts where Nature, in simple guise,
Delights in groves and fields to dwell—
If she were with him they pleased as well,

But where was the poet, the limner, there,
To tell the world that his bride was fair?

But the cloud was still on that lady's brow,
And her restless mind could no peace allow,
To many a haunt did the wanderers rove,
Thro' city and town and mountain and grove,
They left fair Biscay's rocky shore,
They left Asturia's mountains hoar,
Each changing scene and clime they tried,
And paused by Douro's verdant side;
There life flowed softly, ling'ring by,
And there they sought tranquillity.

'Twas evening——shadows long and grey,
  Were stealing where the sun had been,
'Till soon the silver moonbeams lay,
  On tree and rock and meadow green.
They sat within a chamber fair,
  Close to a broad lake's side,
And felt the soft and balmy air,
  Thro' the open casement glide.
An infant girl on her mother's breast,
  Smiled in her slumbers sweet,
And a boy, with pleasure unrepress,
  Was playing at their feet.
" Oh sing, my love," Duarte said,
  " The song I loved so well,
The gentle breeze, that waves the trees,
  Shall answer its tender swell:
'Tis such an eve—'tis such an hour,
As when we loved in our fairy bower."

" Yes, I will sing—but not to-night
Can wake the numbers of delight,
Upon my mem'ry crowding come
The legends of my fairy home;
Of many who forsook our shore
The earth's cold regions to explore,
Who wander still in restless pain,
Seeking for happiness in vain.

Yes, I will sing of him who first,
The too unblest delusion nurst,
That greater joy on earth might be,
And left his Paradise—like me!"

There was a wild, a thrilling tone
In the notes that lady sung,
And sadly, like the night wind's moan,
The solemn music rung:
" But thou," Duarte said—" to thee,
All this a dream alone can be:
Do we not love as fondly yet,
As on the happy day we met?—
Sing, sing again, and let me hear,
Some strain that may at once remove
Dark thoughts that rise and bid me fear,
I know not what that hurts our love!"

He started as he mark'd her eyes,
Gleaming, large and bright,
Like wand'ring stars in unknown skies,
That flash on the mariner's sight:

" Never, never, shall the sun,
Look upon us both again—

Thus the woes of earth I shun,
Mortal cares and mortal pain.
In the golden clouds of day,
Crown'd with gems of purest ray,
Sailing on the perfumed air,
Gaze and thou may'st see me there—
Never, never, shall I know,
More of earth, or more of woe!"

A light of rain-bow tint illumes
The lake with a roseate glow,
And they hear the sound of waving plumes
Fluttering to and fro.
And a low and plaintive voice was heard,
As softly, wild, and clear
As the sorrowing lay of the mourning bird
To breathe in the lady's ear:
"Let not earth thy dwelling be,
The hour—the hour is come!
And thy watchful spirits stay for thee
In thy long deserted home:
Thou may'st not linger, our spells we cast,
Mortal lover!—the hour is past!"

"Holy Mary," Duarte cried,
And turn'd in strange dismay,
But he gazed in vain for his fairy bride,
And fled was that dazzling ray.
He held to his breast his weeping son
Whom close in his arms he twined,
But his bride and her infant girl were gone,
Nor had left a trace behind.

Years pass'd in sorrow and care away,
But he saw them no more from that fatal day!

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Young Alvar grew, and his father's love
Was fix'd on the blooming boy,
Yet would the thought of his mother prove
A spell on his rising joy.
He look'd upon his glowing face,
And blest the heir of Haro's race:
Then turn'd away his mournful eye
And wept in lonely secrecy.
"Why is my father's cheek so pale,
What hidden grief is there?
Oh! may no deed of mine avail
To banish my father's care?"

Thus urg'd the child with infant tears—
And thus he urged in after years.
But Duarte guarded the secret still:—
He felt it was a tale of ill,
A voice to his inmost conscience spoke,
And the stings of late remorse awoke.
For his had been unhallow'd love,
Condemn'd on earth, condemn'd above,
Why should a son of mortals dare,
A spirit's forbidden lot to share!
This truth a holy monk had told,—
One, in pious deeds grown old,—

"Oh, tell me, father, may to Heaven
No expiation yet be given—
May not at last salvation be
To one who dared to sin like me?"

The holy man with many a prayer
Calm'd as he spoke his soul's despair;
"Where the exulting Heathen reigns
The Sacred Sepulchre remains,
To win it from unholy hands
Our knights have led their valiant bands,
Join thou the cause, the cross receive,
And Heaven may yet thy sins forgive!"

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Duarte is gone——and many a year
Over Alvar's head has flown,
But he felt not the kiss to him so dear,
But he heard not the welcome tone
That his childish memory gave him back,
With sorrow and tenderness in its track.
No youthful sports had charms for him,
His cheek grew pale, his dark eye dim;
He mused in silence,—but still the strain
That his father so often sang,
Came in his waking dreams again,
And for ever its music rang
Like airs from a shadowy land unknown,
Now distant and now nigh,

As tho' they summon'd with plaintive tone
  Tow'rds his mystic destiny.
And ever his slumbers gave him bliss
  And his waking but regret,
For then he felt his mother's kiss,
  That kiss he can never forget.
And a tender voice seem'd to chide his stay
From her native regions of ceaseless day.
Long had that sound in his visions woke
  But when late he heard it swell,
In tones of sadness the melody broke,
  And thus the accents fell:
"Come to thy mothers's fairy home!
  And this shall thy guerdon be,
Awhile in the paths of earth to roam
  Thy sister shall wend with thee:
For a year and a day she shall be thine,
So my son for a year and a day be mine."

'Tis night——along fair Douro's side
  The shady tamarinds wave,
No light wing'd bark is seen to glide
Lit by the moonbeams o'er that tide
  Which loves the banks to lave
    So softly and so silently
    Unheeded by the passer by.

Young Alvar left the heath behind,
  The heath, whose many colour'd flow'rs
Threw their last perfume on the wind,
  Then sank to sleep in dewy show'rs.
The forest bent its stately head
  And bade its pines a welcome pay,

The stars a deeper lustre shed,
And glow-worms sparkled in his way.
Hark! thro' the boughs what music rings?—
That note the fairy signal brings!
No—'tis the nightingale, who sings
Her oft-repeated, mournful tale,
Echoed by the sighing gale,
Alas! for many a night withheld,
No more for him that note has swell'd!
The last dark oak its shade has cast,
The forest and its gloom is pass'd,
And the broad ocean to his sight
Spreads her wide breast of silver light,
All calm and waveless in the ray
Save the last billow of glittering spray
That gently the sandy margin presses,
As a mother her sleeping child caresses.

There was no shade on that dark blue deep,
No rock on that woody shore,
Save one that arose alone and steep,
And round its forehead hoar
Fell the moonbeams clear and bright:—
There on that island of purest light
Two forms were gliding that cast no shade,
But seem'd of the rain-bow's colours made.
Now on the utmost verge they stood
Now they hung o'er the shining flood,
Now in the glittering ether sprung,
And thus in heavenly tones they sung:

"All is calm and silent and pure
On earth, in air, and beneath the deep,

The fragile nautilus rides secure,
And all of harm is lull'd to sleep,
'Tis the hour when our mortal guest should come
To bless, to gladden our lonely home.
We shall see his eyes as they gleam thro' the night
For yonder stars have not half their light;
We shall hear his step as it touches the ground,—
The deer's has not so light a sound.
We shall feel his breath, we shall hear his sigh—
We will welcome our mortal merrily!

As Alvar gazed, his wonder grew,
And his fairy mother at once he knew.
By her hand a lovely maid she held—
Never had mortal eye
Before that favoured youth's, beheld
Such grace and Majesty;
And while he looked with joy and pride
On his sister's faultless face,
The lovely pair o'er the waters glide,
And lo! he sees them by his side
And feels their warm embrace.

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He roam'd with them thro' their bright domain,
Whose groves no winter know,
Whose flowers the odour of Heaven retain,
Whose waters for ever flow
Crystal and pure as Zemzem's well,
Thro' meads of eternal asphodel.

There the lotus spreads her perfumed breast
There the Phœnix builds her golden nest,
And the precious Elixir, which to gain
Mortal sages have sought in vain,
There in many a fountain plays
Dazzling with unceasing blaze;
And the germ of riches, on earth unfound
Is strown in the sand of that charmed ground.
But the year is past——the day is gone,
And he must not return to earth alone.

The fairy kiss'd her daughter's brow;
"Farewell, my child," she sigh'd,
"Thy mortal fate decrees that thou
Should'st be a monarch's bride.
For a year and a day thou may'st happy be,
But longer stay is denied to thee."

She took from her breast a charmed flow'r;
"When thou shalt need thy mother's power
Pluck from the stem a single leaf,
And be it in joy, or be it in grief,
Swift as the fears of a mother's heart,
I will be near thee wherever thou art."

PART II.

* Sancho 2nd, fourth king of Portugal, was the handsomest man of his period, and considered one of the best of Portuguese monarchs, but unfortunate, and notwithstanding his valour and numerous good qualities, his subjects rose against him, under pretence of his bestowing too much power on his favourites. One objection raised against him, was, that he had married a wife below his quality. Weak motives to a rebellion, particularly, considering his queen was the daughter of Don Lope Diaz de Haro, Lord of Biscay. Some would have it that the Queen had given her husband a potion, the more to secure his love to her and to divert him wholly from the care of the government.

The insurgents broke into the palace at Coimbra took away the Queen and put her into the Castle of Ourem. This exasperated the King to that height, that gathering what force he could, he endeavoured to recover her, but in vain. Some say the Queen was never heard of after she had been taken from him.

Count Alonzo, brother to Sancho, was appointed to govern in his stead, and he spent the remainder of his life in works of grandeur and piety at Toledo. Having done extraordinary penance for his sins and given singular marks of great devotion, he departed this life in the 39th year of his age. He is said to have had a special devotion to St. Lazarus, who appeared twice to him in his lifetime and was present at his death.—*Faria y Sousa's Hist. of Portugal.*

O'er wild Estrella's heights around
Is heard the hunter's cry,
And to the long unwonted sound
Lamego's hills reply.

For borne upon these gales afar,
Too long has waked the din of war.

'Tis long since press'd by Moorish foes,
Such pastime royal Sancho knows.*
But valiant Payo's† conqu'ring sword
Subdued awhile the Moslem's pride,
And tranquil peace seem'd now restored
By soft Mondego's verdant side.
What subject seeks to disobey?
His heart with every virtue warm,
His skill, his valour known and tried,
And faultless in his face and form
As he for whom Love's mother sigh'd
If happly, deep within his mind,
Some latent spark of evil lay,
Who, midst so many gems, would find
A scattered germ of worthless clay?—
It may be that he loved too well,
After hard days of toil and fight,
In beauty's charmed bowers to dwell,
And bask in pleasure's transient light.
Whilst others must support the weight
Of all the harsher cares of state.

If, midst this calm, the angry din
Of rising murmurs met his ear
His words had eloquence to win,
His smile had softness to endear.

† The chief general of his time was Don Payo Perez Correa, who made great havoc among the Moors.—*Faria y Sousa.*

And tho' their wrongs were unredress'd,
They suffered, censured, saw and bless'd!

"To-day," the monarch said,——"to-day
At least we'll cast our cares away;
Our revels must be loud and deep
To chase stern Aben Afan's sleep,
And if our sport his slumbers break
What heed we, tho' the churl awake?—
Methinks to-day will rise for me
Some unlook'd, happy destiny,
To-day, for me, in yonder skies
A bright, unclouded, star shall rise."

The chace is up, thro' vale, o'er hill
Thro' flood, across the plain,
Young Sancho's eager courser still
Is foremost of the train.
Why sleep'st thou Aben Afan yet
Nor seest the prize before thee thrown
Whose steps the bounds of truce forget
Who roams unguarded and alone?

The watchful Moor has heard full well
The wild and mellow music swell,
Conceal'd amidst the devious way
He marked afar his destined prey,
And in the forest's deep retreat
Awaits the thoughtless king to greet.

Down where a mountain torrent gushes
Bold Sancho's fiery courser rushes—

His rider casts a restless glance
  Across the brawling wave
Ha!—yonder, see his foes advance!—
  St. Lazarus! thy vot'ry save!

Already midway in the stream
He sees on either side the gleam
Of jewell'd turban—pointed lance—
Can he recede—can he advance?
Or shall he tempt the torrent's force
And follow its impetuous course?

He pauses——when from yonder rock
  Resounds a peal like distant thunder,—
The waters tremble to the shock,
  The mighty hills seemed burst asunder.
And, sparkling, dazzling, with unnatural light
A sea of foam comes rushing from the height.
In vain the courser—vain his rider strives
With threat'ning fury still the torrent drives,
The rocks give way—the roaring surge sweeps on,
And both, amidst the deaf'ning waves, are gone!

The Moors with wonder and dismay
  Fled from the water's stunning roar,
And dazzled by the flashing spray,
  Beheld their hapless foe no more.

"Allah!"—they murmur as they go,
"Who may his time appointed know!—*

* No mortal knows the spot on Earth where his grave shall be digged.—*Koran.*

Allah is great—has heard our cry,
And overwhelms our enemy."

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'Tis beautiful at early day
To trace the wild wood's devious way,
To hear the first bird's feeble song,
To mark the grey clouds steal along
Till, shadowless, the sun awakes,
And all to light and being breaks.
The soft wind from the cypress stem
Whispering, shakes each dewy gem,
Sighs 'midst the cedar and the pine
And trembles on the clinging vine.
The rock-rose opes her purple eyes
Between her leaves of varied dyes
And the heath-flower peeps thro' the checquer'd shade
By the carob's feathery branches made.

'Tis peaceful to lie by a rivulet's side
And watch how calmly the waters glide
To see soft wreaths of mist arise
And melt away in the sunny skies
Like transient tears on childhood's face
Whose marks quick springing smiles efface.

Young Alvar and his sister sat
On such a morn, by such a stream,
And—"Oh!" said Urraca "never yet
Of all my restless mind could dream,

Have I pictured a world of purest bliss
So calm, so lovely, so sweet as this.
What joy, what rapture do mortals share—
And I deem'd they dwelt in a region of care!

Bright is the verdure of fairy ground,
There, splendour and riches and beauty are found,
But the freshness, the life, oh! they breathe not there
Which makes your matchless earth so fair.
And, tho' our glories may never fade,
These are real and they but shade."

Alvar smiled——"As yet," he said,
"No sorrow, no suff'ring hast thou seen.
Even here may the gloom of death be spread
And darkness revel where light has been.
If we dare to taste one moment's joy
The next may our happy state destroy,
'Tis better midst shadows of joy to be,
Than the frailty of earthly pleasures to see!"

"Nay brother, you know not how sad and dull
Are the realms you deem so beautiful,
Where none but spirits can come or go,
Where neither pleasure nor pain we know,
Whilst endless change your world can give—
Oh! it *must* be joy with mortals to live!"

While yet she spoke, the waters clear
Turbid and dark and swell'd appear:
A murmuring sound comes on——and now
Wildly, rapidly, they flow:
Bent branches, whirl'd with angry force,

Mark the torrent's gloomy course,
The maid shrunk back——"Behold!—" she cried,
"What bears yon wave upon its breast?—
Methinks amidst the rushing tide
I mark where gleams a shining vest—
Haply some water spirit come
To bear me to my fairy home!"

But Alvar hears not—in the wave
Already had he plunged to save
The struggling being, who in vain
With feeble grasp and nerveless strain
Clings to a sever'd branch and strives
To stem the flood that onward drives
Its victim to his threat'ning fate—
One effort ere 'tis yet too late—
One spring——'tis past! and Alvar bore
The fainting Sancho to the shore.

Escaped the Moslem's deadly hate
To meet a yet more treach'rous fate,
Rescued from each impending ill
A deeper danger waits him still!

In Urraca he saw the star
That long had lured him from afar,
In Urraca the spell he found
That long his secret soul had bound:
All thoughts his ardent mind had framed
However pure, however bright,
Before her purity were shamed
Before her beauty lost their light.
He deem'd her smile with life was fraught

Such life to angels only given,
Her sight was all of earth he sought,
Her love was all he sought of Heaven!
He felt that those may meet by chance
Whom fate too long had kept apart
And learn in one electric glance
What years could never teach the heart.

Not long the impatient king delay'd—
Soon to his anxious court returning
St. Lazarus' holy shrine display'd
Rich lamps on jewell'd altars burning.
And soon in regal pomp was seen
The fairy maid as Sancho's queen.

And from that hour he lived alone
For her he fondly, madly loved;
His subjects sought the vacant throne,
Their pray'rs, their threats alike unmov'd.
They saw him beauty's passive slave
And while they pitied, yet forgave:
They waited till—his frenzy past,—
To reason he should turn at last.

But no! from day to day unchanged
The fatal passion chain'd him still,
Until their hearts were all estranged
And only throbb'd with thoughts of ill.
"Why chose he not a queen," they cried,
"Who boasts a high and noble name?—
What know we of his stranger bride
Or whence the fair enchantress came?

May she not be of Moorish blood,
And in her path destruction spring—
And shall we nurse her impious brood
And seek amidst her sons a king!
What tho' the minion Alva claim
For each the blood of Haro's race;
There hovers o'er Duarte's name
A mystery time can ne'er efface.
Alonzo's fair and noble bride*
Had blush'd to see her son allied
To one, whose worthless charms alone
Have made her heiress of a throne.
Above his head dark tempests lower
Which soon shall pour in vengeance down:
He cast aside in evil hour
The monk's *Capelo* for the crown!"†

Wild, loud and fierce the tumult grew,
Yet, deep entranced in love's excess,
Unhappy Sancho saw nor knew
Aught to disturb his happiness.
The destined year of joy was gone,
And all unmark'd had closed the day;
The queen, her term of absence done,
To fairy-land should bend her way.

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* The mother of king Sancho 2nd, was Urraca, daughter of Alonzo 8th of Castile. called the Noble and Good a most wise and beautiful princess.—*Sousa.*

† Sancho was called *Capelo*. because, being sickly in his childhood, his mother, confiding to obtain his health thro' the intercession of the holy father St. Augustin, caused him to wear that habit.—*Sousa.*

But in their present blissful lot,
All but each other both forgot.

Coimbra's palace gleams with light,
The feast, the song, the dance are there,
Can treason cast its lurid blight
O'er scenes so happy and so fair!
Amidst those notes of revelry
What means rebellion's hideous cry?
Whom seek the traitors 'midst the throng
That crowd that gorgeous place,
Leading the festive dance along
With majesty and grace?
Near and more near the murmur swells—
"The Queen!—the Queen!—'tis she we seek!
Our monarch writhes beneath her spells,
We come the fatal charm to break.
Rive but the fell enchantress' chain
And Sancho is our king again!"

Terror and dire confusion spread—
Destruction rears her giant head,
The regal walls resist in vain,
The few who dare contend are slain,
And Sancho, tho' by numbers press'd,
Still bleeds, still fights in wild despair
Till from his fond and sheltering breast
Her foes their fainting victim tear,
And from the still encreasing fray
He sees her, lifeless, borne away.

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'Twas in a cell obscure and dim
Fair Urraca to sense awoke,
And deem'd some dark, terrific dream,
Had o'er her fever'd slumbers broke;
Erewhile a queen, beloved, carest,
And now—a dungeon's wretched guest!
Then o'er her mind remembrance rose
Of all she once could call her own,
The home she left—the fate she chose,
And him, who risk'd for her a throne.

" Where is he now!—perchance like me
Confined within some dismal cell,
In vain he struggles to be free,
If but to breathe one last farewell!
Of all his suff'rings all his woe,
The cause, the fatal cause am I,
On me then fall the threatened blow
On me the weight of misery!
Oh! were it possible to save—
Ha!—'tis not yet perchance too late!
The charm, the charm my mother gave
May yet avert his dreadful fate."

With eager haste the flower she seeks
And plucks a leaf, with trembling hand,—
Lo! where thro' the cell a day beam breaks
And the floor with rainbow colours streaks
She sees her fairy mother stand.

But mournful is her altered brow
And her voice is sorrowful and low,

Like the night wind thro' the autumn trees
Or the harp that sighs to the dying breeze.

" What would my child?——I never thought
To gaze on thee again—
And now our meeting will be fraught
With deep regret and pain.
I will grant thee all that yet I may
To one who dared to disobey."

" Mother!—by the love that won thee
Once to quit thy starry sphere,
Look with tender pity on me,
And my woes with mercy hear.
Save, oh save my husband's life,
Leave to fate his wretched wife."

" Then come with me to thy native land,
Thy husband yet may live,
For Alvar leads a faithful band
And valiantly they strive:
He may be saved, he may be free,
But is lost if he return to thee.
For thy foes have sworn a deadly vow
That rings upon the air even now,
And the fatal moment ye shall meet,
Will see him murdered at thy feet!"

" Why may we not together go,
Together fly from this world of woe,—
Our realm has room for him and me
And we may be blest eternally!"

The fairy sigh'd—" Those days are o'er,
No mortal may visit our regions more.
Earthly clay and our spirit must sever,
Thy fault has seal'd our doom for ever.
Come, and fear not, thy lover's grief
Will find in the lapse of years relief,
For mortals forget what casts a gloom
Over our realms of eternal bloom,
Time steals away all mortal regret,
Tho' we who have loved can never forget.
Save him, and fly from this world with me,
Or stay and he owes his ruin to thee."

Then Urracca wiped the tear from her eye
And thus she made her sad reply—
" Oh thou, so dearly, deeply loved—
To whom my fondness fatal proved,
Would I were mortal for thy sake,
At least my heart would learn to break!
All of thy nature which is mine
Will make me ceaselessly repine;
All of my own will bid me know
A sad eternity of woe.
Farewell—our hope, our love is o'er,
Farewell—we part to meet no more!"

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Rebellion stalk'd with fearful mien,
And fatal had the struggle been

'Twixt angry subjects and their sire,
But Alvar boldly met their ire,
And gallant Payo, he whose fame
Made dreadful Lusitania's name,
To stem the torrent firmly stood
And check'd the rage of treason's flood,
But, ere to peace and reason tamed,
The long contemn'd, but powerful crowd
A mighty sacrifice have claim'd,
And thus they urged, in murmurs loud.

"Far from our shores let Alvar go,
And in some sacred cloister's shade
Let Urraca deplore the woe
She caused the realm, the king, she sway'd."

"Enough," said Alvar, "'tis my fate
To be for ever desolate.
My transient bliss was but a shade,
A vision, glowing but to fade.
Let not my king his friend regret,
A bond of duty, long delay'd,
Which for thy sake I dared forget,
Shall hence alas! tho' late, be paid.
And to atone my past misdeeds
To Syria's plain revered and holy,
Clad in a palmer's simple weeds
My steps shall bend, devout and lowly.

There, where the fields of fame invite
My father's banner yet may wave,
There side by side we yet may fight,
Or both deserve a glorious grave."

Thus Alvar breath'd his sad adieu,—
But ere for ever he withdrew
He begg'd one latest boon, in vain,
His hapless sister to embrace:
Alas! unheedful of his pain
The stern decree admits no grace;
And from Mondego's shores in haste
The solitary pilgrim past.

But tho' the indignant king beheld
His friend, his brother, thus departed,
And tho' his breast with anguish swell'd,
Of joy bereft, of hope deserted;
No thought had ever dared intrude
Amidst his sorrow's solitude,
In danger's most severe excess
To make him love his bride the less.
Or for one moment taught his heart
That they could live and live apart.

"Tho' for a space our love be crost
No rebel's power can bid us sever;
I bless my crown, my kingdom lost
Which but secures thee mine for ever.
Together from this fatal shore
To any realm remote we'll fly,
There thou shalt mourn, beloved, no more,
There dread no envious enemy,
Entwined our hearts as closely dwell
As in the rose's inmost cell
Its youngest leaves embracing lie,—
And thus together we must die.

My faithless country I resign—
The wealth of endless love is mine!"

Ah! hapless king, the seal is set
Thy glowing hopes are vain and void;—
As flowers that evil winds have met
In one sad hour are all destroy'd.
On secret mission fondly bent
Her friends succeed the cell to gain,—
With souls that knew not to relent
Her foes have sought her there in vain;
Escaped their love, escaped their power,
No eye beheld her from that hour!

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There is many a relic of worth untold
In Toledo's sacred shrine,*

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* At Toledo were twenty-eight convents, the largest and finest of which, was that of St. Francis.

The immense church contained a remarkable curiosity, viz.; that amidst the great number of columns, with which it is ornamented, was a quantity of vases filled with orange trees, pomegranates, jasmines and myrtles of great height, which formed beautiful allies on every side of the church, producing a delightful effect and casting a delicious perfume.

Besides which, at the entrance of the choir and of every chapel, were arranged large aviaries filled with birds of every kind, whose notes mingled with those of the priests and the people and with the sound of the organ and other instruments.—*Melanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque, Paris* 1779.

Rich with gems and bright with gold
Fitting a treasure divine.
And seldom is given to mortal eye
On so fair, so lovely, a scene to gaze
As the wondrous beauty and majesty
St. Francis' holy church displays.
There pillars of purest marble shine,
And round them fragrant branches twine
Casting their garlands below—above—
Making the aisles a perfumed grove.
The myrtle's and jasmine's flowers of snow
The rich pomegranate's crimson glow
Among their leaves of softened green
In gay luxuriance are seen.
And birds awaken their sweetest song,
As, like scattered jewels, they flit along,
New odours seeking from every spray,
And warbling their little lives away.
The sweetest airs that mortal art
Can bid the organ, the harp, impart,
The horn's wild tone, the flute's soft sigh,
Blend in one hymn of harmony.

But of all that Toledo's treasure can boast
She prizes her royal penitent most,
Who has laid his earthly sceptre down
To gain by prayer a heavenly crown.

King Sancho has yielded his wide command
To be sway'd by Alonzo, his brother's hand,
He has cast the crown from his faded brow,
And yon cell is the space of his kingdom now.

To him might the poor and the wretched come
For succour beneath that sacred dome,
Never unmoved did he hear the cry
Of penitence or of misery,
His words were meek and calm his mien
But no smile on his features was ever seen.

When the flowers their latest perfume cast
Along those shadowy aisles he pass'd,
His arms o'er his bosom devoutly crost,
In rapt and solemn musings lost:
All night, at St. Lazarus' altar prone,
He pray'd in a low and sorrowing tone,
And morning's beam beheld him there
Wrapt in deep and unceasing prayer
The brothers have sought St. Lazarus' shrine
When night's last star had ceased to shine
Mass for a parted soul to say.
King Sancho still at the altar pray'd
No motion his rigid limbs betray'd,
On the marble steps entranced he lay.
Nor yet was ended his orison
When the silent and solemn train were gone.

All day none came the shrine to seek
None dared his holy penance to break,
But when night's deep shadows closed around
Still at the altar the king they found.
With pious fear his limbs they raised,
His hands were stiffened, his eyes were glazed,
And the smile that never had lit his brow
Sat on his pallid features now.

And spoke of hope, of sins forgiven
To the soul that had wing'd its way to Heaven.

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On Syria's plain there are dinted shields
Where the red cross gleams afar,
And each knight a deadly falchion wields
Who strives in the blessed war.
For Heaven has given resistless might
To all who maintain the holy fight.

But no arms of proof yon palmer wears
His trusty staff alone he bears,
No lance, no falchion, no plumed crest,
A shell on his cowl and a cross on his breast.
Yet before his step the pagans fly
And he comes like a spirit of victory.

But when the battle was ended none
Could tell where that warlike Palmer is gone;
They sought him thro' the sanguine plain
But they found him not amidst the slain.

Mount Lebanon's aged hermit can tell
The fate of that valiant pilgrim well,
He has tended him with pious care,
He has sooth'd him with many a saving prayer,
His wounds are healed his errors are shriven
He has hope thro' repentance to be forgiven,

Their prayers are ceaseless, their penance sore
And from that moment they part no more,
And long the crusader shall bless the cell
Where Duarte and Alvar together dwell.

If ever in the silent night
  Shadowy forms thro' the moonlight steal,
When the stars with faint and fitful light
  Awhile the gloomy shore reveal—
Then, canopied in a misty shroud
Struggle in vain thro' a lurid cloud :—
If music ever at such an hour
Casts the spell of its mystic power
Sweet and tender, but sad and low,
Sounds that parted lovers know,—
'Tis when Urraca and her mother glide
Over the still and waveless tide,
Over the plain, the hill, the grove,
Scenes that speak of their mortal love
'Tis when Urraca and her mother mourn
Hours of joy that may never return
The echoes answer them——" Never, never!"—
Ours is despair that endures for ever!"

CHAPTER XII.

With subjects like these the flight of time was accelerated and the uniformity of the voyage beguiled of its monotony.

Don Gaspar continued to preserve the haughty coldness of his demeanour, or was principally engaged with his uncle in devising measures for the government of the new colony; Don Jacinto found, therefore, fewer difficulties

in his way than he had anticipated, and a degree of confidence insensibly established itself between him and Dona Inez; whom, if he admired before, he now, like a true lover, found far above all his ardent imagination had ever fancied, and his passion became every day more tender and more devoted. Inez, too, began to feel that her situation was less irksome than she had previously feared, and though the recollections of her future lot, and the engagement entered into by her father, would often obtrude themselves on her mind, she strove to banish the painful feelings to which they gave rise, and inwardly acknowledged a secret inclination for the many amiable qualities of Don Jacinto. He, on his side, was not so devoid of all penetration as to be long without perceiving the effect his attentions had produced, though they were at all times guarded by the strictest rules of decorum, and, happy in the knowledge, he a thousand times blest the propititious fortune that had so far be-

friended him. Whatever might await him in the future, the present time was, at least, one of unmitigated happiness, and he did not, by endeavours to unriddle the secret of years to come, mar the brightness of that halcyon time of love and peace. And Inez listened to his voice, and thought he spoke as none had ever spoken before: his ideas, his sentiments, his expressions were all in unison with hers—she soon felt that all their thoughts were in common, and she became accustomed to refer to him, and to consult him on all occasions. Without a word of love having been spoken it seemed as if their hearts had mutually explained each other's secret, understood the difficulties, were aware of the obstacles between them, but continued to encrease their store of affection without question and without the necessity of avowal. Alas! youth is fearless, and does not start at dangers which are but too palpable in after years, does not avoid the path which seems to be full of springing flowers but in which age

sees a tangled way, rugged with briars, and concealing poisonous weeds.

The voyage was for a long time prosperous, and a steady succession of fair winds seemed to promise a happy result; the mates of the vessel and several of the crew had already made the voyage to Hispaniola, and all their auguries were favourable. La Fortuna was rather a duller sailor than the Estrella del Mar, but when the breeze was moderate the vessels kept company very well together. As their course, which had hitherto been shaped well to the south began to alter to the westward, and feel the effect of the *constant breeze*, whose regular current was at that period unknown, and as the numerous wonders of the deep began to display themselves in shapes novel and extraordinary, a considerable degree of excitement was manifest in the joyful hope of their speedily approaching the shore so anxiously sought.

The birds of the air, the monsters of the deep, and the very weeds which floated on its

surface, were all examined with eager eyes, as if each were a peculiar sign of the neighbourhood of the expected coast. At one time their attention would be excited by the wheeling flight of the tropic bird round their masts, as if she too were desirous of knowing who the wanderers were, who now invaded her hitherto unmolested region; at another, the strange appearance of the flying fish, the denizens of two distinct elements, awoke the spirit of enquiry, and gave rise to endless conjectures. The frequent calms, the burning heats—felt even by natives of Spain—and the sudden transition of the winds, as they continued to advance, were all hailed as the true signs of the event for which they prayed. Often did the misgivings, the hopes and wishes of the crew of the great navigator Columbus recur to the memory of the adventurers, and eagerly would they listen while Don Jacinto sang the traditional song describing their own feelings in similar circumstances.

THE FIRST DISCOVERY OF COLUMBUS.

" The howling winds forbid us
To trust the fatal main,
Oh turn our labouring vessel
To harbour once again!
Why to this ' bold Italian'
Our lives, our hopes confide?
No golden land awaits us
Beyond the shoreless tide!
How long shall he deceive us
With boasting vain and loud,
And when we gaze for land
He can show us but a cloud!"

The gallant leader heard,
But he listened undismayed,
Tho' he saw their furious glances
And their daggers half display'd:
No fear was in his soul—
But his heart was wrung with woe,
Shall he quail before their murmurs,
And his glorious meed forego?
Had he braved the ocean's terrors
In tempest and in night,
And shall he furl his sails
With the promised goal *in sight?*
For he look'd towards the horizon
And mark'd the setting sun
And by its crimson light
He knew a world was won!

* * *

'Twas in the deepest midnight
As they cut the yielding wave,
When not a star was shining
To guide them, or to save,—
As in awful sullen silence
Their onward course they steer,
Far in the murky distance—
Lo!—glimmering lights appear!
With long wild cries of wonder
They watch the opening sky
As with the morning rises
Their rapturous certainty:
Through the silvery vapour gleaming
Extends the welcome strand,
And trees and rocks and mountains
Before their view expand:
They breast the foaming surges
And, shouting, leap to shore,
While ev'ry echo answers
"God!—and Saint Salvador!"

They had now been forty days at sea, and the hope of a speedy termination to the voyage arose in the breasts of all. On the fortieth evening the sun, which had glowed throughout the day with intense heat, now sunk red and

fiery beneath the sea, and the wind, which had baffled about with unequal force, occasionally dying away to rise gently in a new quarter, seemed to settle itself into a regular current from the southeast.

As the short tropical twilight speedily disappeared, the clouds of night deepened into a portentous blackness, and the wind came sighing along the ocean with a mournful tone, as if it were the precursor of some event to be dreaded. By degrees the freshness of the breeze encreased, and the hurried drift of the scud across the watery moon told but too plainly that a gale might be expected. The experienced seamen shook their heads, and recalled to mind the sudden fury of the storms in these unknown regions, with feelings to which they gave no utterance. It was evident, however, to all that it was coming on to blow, and signal was made to shorten sail. Lights also were hung at the poop and at the main. These precautions were not taken too soon, for with a

suddenness, rare except in these latitudes, a gale of wind soon arose, and with it a heavy, rolling sea, which rendered all their seamanship necessary in keeping their vessels steady before the gale.

More sail was now taken in; yet, impelled alike by wind and wave, the ships seemed rather to increase than diminish the rapidity of their progress. Occasionally the hoarse murmurs of the rushing billows might be heard amidst the storm, growling like wolves in chase of their devoted prey, as they rose and curled high above the taffril, and sunk in disappointed fury when the good ships sped before the increasing impulse of their shock.

All night the gale continued with increasing violence, but still the admiral kept in sight: about the morning watch however she was too far astern to be visible, except when, mounted on an immense wave, her naked spars might be seen from the tops of the Estrella. The sea ran mountains high, and it was thought dange-

rous to scud any longer, especially as her consort was no longer near. In the hope of giving her an opportunity of bearing up, as well as to enable the Estrella to weather the storm more securely, a favourable momentary abatement was seized upon, and she was brought to with only one solitary sail to steady her against the increasing fury of the storm.

The change which a few short hours had wrought in the appearance of the ship and in those on board was as great as it was sudden. Except the regular crew and a few who had witnessed the chiding of the Atlantic on her eastern shore, they were all strangers to the direful aspect of a storm at sea, and the greater part magnifying the actual danger in secret, thought that there was little chance of reaching any shore whatever. No expressions of fear, if entertained, were suffered to escape, as they were men who had ventured their all upon the cast, and were fully prepared to stand the hazard of the die. The women, naturally more

apprehensive, and having less command of their fears, seemed at once to part with hope: and many were clamourous in the expression of their grief and devotional vows, if they should haply be spared to fulfil them. Inez alone preserved her presence of mind; though equally timorous with the gentlest of her sex, a fund of real courage sustained her as the crisis became more trying; perhaps she might the better act so difficult a part from observing the calmness and unruffled gravity of her father, the indifferent pride of Don Gaspar, and the steady firmness of Don Jacinto, who was ever and anon at her side, uttering words of assurance, and again in the midst of the crew stimulating them by his example, and assisting them with his advice. In this situation the vessel lay, the helm lashed and the fore and main hatches battened closely down: for the sea rising each time higher than before, kept repeatedly breaking over the bows.

At length a tremendous gust, accompanied

by a violent shock, which shook the ship from stem to stern, completely cleared the decks fore and aft and carried away the foretop mast. Several of the crew fell victims also to the fury of the overwhelming wave: the shock was so sensibly felt and the ship laid down so much beneath it, that for a moment it seemed as if she were totally engulphed in the abyss of foam which boiled around her.

The terrific crash of the masts and yards recalled once more the energies of the seamen, and hurried them on deck to ascertain the loss they had sustained, and examine how far it was reparable. With their axes they soon completed that which the storm had but imperfectly done; and, lightened by the damage, the vessel for a time rode easier.

The storm continued throughout the whole day, if that light might be called day which was only darkness visible; the face of the heavens was nearly obscured, and the sea appeared to swell into the very clouds, while a

thick mist enveloped every object. It was impossible to form any conjecture as to their present position, and the only hope now entertained was, that they were yet far from the "promised land," which a few hours since they would have been grieved to imagine.

About nightfall, as the few who could keep the deck, were anxiously watching the continuance of the gale, a light became suddenly visible at the extremity of the mainyard, which presently shifted its position and glided amongst the shrouds, where it remained for a long time stationary; the appearance gave rise to many ominous fears among the crew, as they recognised the sacred fire of St. Elmo, the harbinger of misfortune to all who are unlucky enough to behold it.

CHAPTER XIII.

At intervals during the night the light of St. Elmo was observed in different parts of the ship, and finally disappeared over the stern; one old sailor who had weathered many a storm was heard to express his belief that if any further mischance befel them it might be expected from that quarter.

A second day broke, and the wind and waves were still raging with unmitigated fury; to add to their apprehensions, a leak was discovered, and all hands were busily employed at the

pumps. It seemed now as if fate had done its worst, and the last efforts of despair alone supplied them with strength to combat this accumulation of evil. The sky was this day somewhat clearer than on the preceding one; and the men, though completely worn out with exertion, were still striving to keep the ship afloat, which seemed an event little short of a miracle to endure for long, when a cry was suddenly heard of "land!"

All eyes were eagerly bent astern, in which direction a man in the maintop declared he had seen it, and the next wave, mounting the vessel high on its surface, enabled those on deck to confirm his assertion. Land was distinctly visible: they appeared distant from it little more than a mile, but the weather was still too hazy to enable them to see more than a bluff line of rocky coast, guarded, it would seem, by a perilous bulwark of breakers, whose loud roaring could, even at this distance, be plainly heard. To continue drifting towards the shore

was to expose them all to certain destruction. It was therefore resolved to hoist out the long boat—the only one left—in the hope, if it lived, of saving at least a few, and to endeavour to make all sail with the vessel till the coast should be more clearly discerned, and then, as the last chance, run her ashore where it appeared most practicable, if no other expedient could be employed.

There was little time for deliberation, and a few stout oarsmen already manned the boat, into which the governor and Don Gaspar were hurried, while Jacinto, assuming a guardianship which the crisis of the moment prevented being controuled, bore the almost insensible Inez from her cabin to the side, and succeeded in depositing her in the frail bark. The action of being transferred to the upper air recalled her fleeting senses, but it was only to lose them again in beholding the boat separated from the vessel before Jacinto himself could attain it. A piercing shriek, and the name of "Jacinto!"

pronounced in agonised accents, announced how dearly, even at this moment, she felt the pang of separation, and revealed to Don Gaspar, who scowled triumphantly at his unfortunate rival, the confirmation of his fears, at the very time when they ceased to be the cause of anxiety. The next moment beheld the boat bounding above the foam towards the shore as they lost sight of the Estrella, again—and for the last time—to scud before the gale.

It would be impossible to describe the terrible sensations experienced by Don Jacinto when the frail bark in which was all he loved on earth was borne from him—as he now deemed to certain destruction. Had he been there also, though he might not have been able to avert the fate which he dreaded for Inez, he would still have had the consolation of being near her to the last, and at least have been able to die in attempting her preservation. The fear of endangering her safety had alone withheld him from leaping from the ship when the

boat was so rapidly borne away, and his anguish was unutterable when he reflected on the immense perils which now environed her. A faint gleam of hope still held out a chance of their gaining the shore in safety, and the bare idea was sufficient to restore his wonted energy. Regarding his own safety only so far as it might conduce to the welfare of Inez he strove to inspire the seamen with the hope of yet weathering the gale, and finding a favourable port along the coast, into which their shattered vessel might run.

With considerable skill, and not without great risk, they contrived to keep the ship away under as much sail as she could safely spread, and then hauled up as far to windward as the violence of the storm would permit, though the leak began to increase tremendously, and she shipped as much water above deck as the men pumped from below. The few not immediately employed in this laborious service were eagerly straining their eyes to discover, if the

coast were at all familiar to them from the descriptions they had heard, or what some of them had seen, of the shores of Hispaniola; but it remained unknown to all, and as the sky became gradually somewhat clearer, they saw with dismay that a boiling surf, extending all along the shore for nearly half a mile in width offered no asylum for the tempest tost!

Jacinto's fears for the safety of the boat which had long since disappeared from their view, now rose to an immeasurable height, and he bitterly lamented not having plunged into the wave when the sound of Inez's voice ceased to vibrate on his ear: though he reflected not that to have done so would have been to ensure certain death, without the slightest chance of affording assistance. He was almost tempted to do so now, but his presence of mind enabled him to get the better of this feeling, and he resolved, while his life should be spared, to devote it to the interests of those around him.

It was then, with extreme attention that he

examined the long line of coast, which the vessel, though steering from, was evidently nearing—a circumstance which indicated the presence of a strong current, and made most on board apprehensive lest they should be forced on shore before they saw a favourable opportunity of so doing. The aspect of the coast, as far as could be discovered, had in it nothing that was prepossessing; it seemed to be entirely bound by rugged rocks, which were themselves surmounted by lofty hills, for the greater part sandy, desolate and apparently unproductive. Occasionally straggling patches of a dark coloured foliage might be descried; but it seemed as if even this were an effort of nature which the ungrateful quality of the soil, or the blighting effects of tempest, had rendered almost unavailing.

Daylight was now beginning to wane, and though the ship still made her way, it was impossible unless the storm abated that they could expect to survive the night through,

from the dangers of the leak on one hand and the perils of the rocky coast on the other. At length a point of land hove in sight where it seemed as if some friendly bay were likely to be discovered in doubling it, from the hills of sand which crowned the summit and a sandy encircling base. The line of breakers which had hitherto marked the coast appeared also to terminate at this point; and it was therefore resolved to stand rather closer in, to see if the endeavours to land were practicable. The helm was accordingly put up, but it was in a fatal moment! for hardly had the ship begun to obey the new direction, before a violent shock, which vibrated like that of an earthquake, accompanied by a terrific crash aloft, announced that the vessel had struck on a sunken reef; and the rush of the waters sweeping over the weather side, as she lay with her bows pitching on the rocks, proclaimed that destruction was rapidly approaching.

All further thoughts of utility were there-

fore lost, and the last faint hope of self-preservation alone inspired the crew: the strongest and most skilful endeavoured to form rafts wherewith to float ashore, while some, madly cursing the cause which had lured them from their native Spain to perish on these inhospitable shores, and too much worn for active exertion, seemed hopelessly to consign themselves to a fate which was inevitable.

Prayer and blasphemy, execrations and self-accusing repentance were the sounds which mingled with the gale and clamoured far above the roar of waters: while despair was stamped alike on the features of the bigoted zealot, and on those of him, who long deferring the epoch of repentance, was now too late assured of its inefficacy. A few brave spirits there were whom the fear of death could not subdue, and who calmly awaited the final moment with the true resignation with which courage, long inured to danger, can face the gloomy shadow.

The ship, strained in all her timbers and

rising with every wave to fall with a heavier crash on the bed of rocks beneath, at length entirely gave way; and one wide rush of the impetuous flood came pouring in from below, while the decks quivered with the last pang of her mortal travail, and the Estrella del Mar sunk, like her brighter rival, the setting sun—but not like him to rise. Alas! his first beams were destined to shine on one solitary, mutilated mast—the only visible remains of the gallant bark which now lay buried beneath the waves that encircle the islands since called the *Bermudas.*

Such was the fate of the stout vessel and her able crew, who, only two days before, were gaily riding over the ocean foam, little dreaming how soon their lot should whelm them beneath it. The beautiful Estrella had disappeared, and all "the freighting souls within her," strown along the rocky shore, or wafted seaward, to find a grave in the bosom of the deep, "farther than ever plummet sounded!"

There was, however, one solitary being in whom life still lingered, though he lay to all appearance as senseless as the numerous forms scattered around him. This individual was Don Jacinto. He had succeeded in escaping the vortex caused by the sinking vessel, on a raft to which several others were clinging; but of this support they were speedily deprived, as it was dashed from shoal to shoal, where each billow diminished its size, and swept off some unfortunate wretch to perish like his comrades.

When the last wave hurled the fragment on shore, to which two figures clung, one of them still retained his hold in the convulsive grasp of death, the other still breathed. As the day declined, the sea presented only one wide expanse, unmarked by any sign of the frail dominion of man, and as if the demon of the storm had been appeased by the human sacrifice just made, the hoarse murmurs of the wind died away in fitful gusts, till its voice was

entirely hushed, and the ocean weltered above the dead with a sluggish swell, as the fury which had so long agitated it began gradually to subside. At midnight all was calm, and the cloudless moon shone tranquilly on the silent shore.

The first sensations of returning consciousness, as the bright beams of the sun glanced on his prostrate form, awoke Jacinto to the memory of his misfortunes: his mind was confused, and his brain felt dizzy with the horrors which he had witnessed within the last few days; but by degrees his mind recalled the sad events, and he mourned over the wretched remains of his ill-fated companions, and bitterly dwelt on the probability of his being *alone* on these accursed shores—an outcast from the world, and a burden to himself.

He rose with difficulty from the sand, and supporting his exhausted frame on a broken spar which lay near him, endeavoured to drag his limbs along the shore to seek for an open-

ing into the country, in the hope that it might prove inhabited and fertile. At length he reached a projecting point of rock at the extremity of the sandy beach, and turning the angle he beheld a broad bay, or rather sound, extended before him, studded with innumerable small islands, glowing with verdure and breathing from its foliage an aromatic odour, whose perfume, even at that distance, revived his fainting spirits.

The point on which he stood was a tongue of land which appeared to belong to that along which they had coasted the day before: it formed one side of the extensive sound, and seemed to stretch along another side to the left, though, as it was indented with numerous bays, he could not ascertain whether it were insulated or not. In front, and to the right it was evident that there was no connexion with the shore from which he gazed, the islands being almost all distinctly visible as such.

There could be no greater contrast in nature

than that which presented itself in the difference between the coast on which he had been wrecked and that which he now saw smiling before him in all the luxuriance of shady grove and woody mountain.

It appeared as if the land put on her most unpromising aspect towards the sea, to deter the footsteps of the stranger from discovering her hidden treasures within.

So thought Don Jacinto as, with renewed hope, he pursued his slow track towards the interior, trusting soon to meet with some habitation or friendly native who would afford him sustenance. But vainly did he look out for the usual indications of the presence of man; not a building was to be seen—not a human creature met his view. Exhausted with fatigue he contrived to reach the borders of the nearest thicket, and there threw his wearied limbs on the elastic greensward which was spread at his feet, under the shadow of a tall plant, whose broad leaves falling over like a plume of

feathers cast a deep shade round and sheltered him completely from the glare of the sun; while a long branch, or stalk, the end of which was bent downwards by the heavy weight of its rich ripe fruit, offered him the means of quenching thirst and relieving hunger.

Refreshed from both, and unwilling or unable to quit the cool retreat, he reclined himself at the foot of the friendly banana, and endeavoured to form conjectures as to the spot where chance had led him: in a few minutes he was fast asleep.

The heat of the day was past when he awoke greatly restored: he had ceased to feel that inward sinking of the frame when the mind and body suffer together; nature had done her part to restore his bodily strength, and he resolved that his mental faculties should no longer be obscured. The brightness of the atmosphere, and the brilliant hues in which every object animate and inanimate were decked, all concurred to restore the tone of his mind and

inspire him with a feeling of patience if not of hope.

His first duty, as well as his strongest inclination, led him to the sea shore to see if haply any of his brother seamen were saved from the wreck, or if he could be instrumental in preserving any, should they yet breathe. In this he was doomed to suffer disappointment; for though the evidences of the wreck were in plenty along the coast, yet the mutilated and cold remains of such bodies as the tide had left at high water mark, were entirely beyond the cares of this world.

The sea-birds which had kept aloof as long as the tide gave an appearance of animation to the floating corses were now hovering over their prey; and heedless of Jacinto's approach, were gorging themselves with their appalling meal.

His heart sickened at the sight, and he reflected how slight the chance had been which preserved him to witness such a scene instead

of undergoing the same fate. It was clear, then, that he was the only one that had been spared of the ship's crew, and he dreaded to think that perhaps he was the sole being existing of all who had sailed in the Sea Star, and been driven towards this fatal shore!

He was ignorant besides, whether this coast were a part of the mainland of America, or only another of the numerous islands which formed the uncounted Archipelago originally discovered by Columbus. Leaving to time and opportunity to clear this point he proceeded in the meanwhile to furnish himself with materials for constructing a hut, as near the shore as was convenient. These he found in plenty, and having chosen the site of his habitation near the spot where he had slept, and to which a nearer path conducted across the peninsula, which he had coasted, he tasked his strength to the utmost to convey the necessary fragments of spars and timbers which, as his own architect, he required. In such a situation the

wants of man are soon gratified, and a hut presently rose, which, though built in the rudest manner, was to him a place of trust and refuge, which he took a degree of melancholy pleasure in beholding. The *débris* of the wreck were not confined to form the frame of his new dwelling, but furnished him with many other things, the utility of which he gratefully acknowledged. A sea chest, in which were some linen, a few carpenter's tools, some books on navigation and divinity, and one or two of romance, and an old cutlass, were amongst the principal articles which he rejoiced in discovering. In a drawer, by itself, he found also a bag filled with pieces of eight—a treasure more useless, in his present state, than that of the rustiest nail in the worn plank. With a feeling almost approaching to anger he cast it aside, as it seemed to present itself in mockery of his forlorn condition. All day he wrought hard, but the moonlight shed her beams upon the level ocean before his labours were completed,

and the banana which had furnished him his morning repast now supplied his evening meal, its thick shadowy leaves serving not only as a roof for his hut, but strewed on the ground offering him a luxurious couch.

Thus past the first day of man on the shores of the Bermudas, a day fraught with care and toil, and a melancholy type of the many which succeeded in aftertimes!

On the second morning Jacinto arose from his leafy bed with renewed vigour and lighter spirits. Again he sought the beach, and saw with pain the effect which the heat of the climate and the ravenous beaks of the carrion birds had wrought on the unhappy few who strewed the shore. He abandoned therefore the idea he had formed of collecting their bones into one common heap, and preserving them from further violence.

"What matters it," thought he, "whether they become the food of the seagull or the worm; or whether the sun shall wither

their bones, instead of their mouldering beneath the soil. Alas! it is but a trick of custom!"

He turned away, and pursued his course towards his hut, laden as before with spars, pieces of cordage, and such things as were most portable. Having deposited his burden, and secured the entrance as well as he could against the intrusion of wild beasts, if there should be any on this silent coast, he set forward to examine the country, taking care to observe such peculiarities in the neighbourhood of his dwelling as should render it easy to be recognised again. He assumed his cutlass, in case of accidents, and thus armed, pursued his way. He deemed it advisable in his first excursion to keep as near the shore of the sound as he could, for fear of losing his way; and indeed he found this the easiest as well as the safest plan, for the thickets, as they approached the water's edge, became less intricate, and allowed him a freer passage.

Beauty and luxuriance met him at every step, and he often paused to gaze in rapt admiration at the novel charms of the scenery that opened upon him. On one side his attention was riveted on the lofty palmetto with solitary naked stem, surmounted by a graceful crown of fan-like foliage; on the other his wonder was excited by those mournful looking trees, the mangroves, which, growing in the water, dip their boughs into the wave and take root again, while shell fish of various kinds become incrusted on them, and seem as if they were the natural fruit.

The golden orange and the glowing pomegranate gleamed at intervals through the groves of perfumed cedar trees which marked his way, and flowers of all hues embroidered the verdant turf on which he trod, or hung in graceful festoons from large masses of mossy rock overshadowing his path.

Altogether it seemed a perfect land of faëry,

all save the warbling of the birds was so still; so bright were the tints of flower and leaf, and so exquisite the deep clear blue of the transparent wave and overarching sky. Occasionally his progress was arrested by the glittering vision of birds, whose plumage was of the richest, hues—scarlet, purple, and yellow, of dazzling brilliancy, and as the sun shone on their resplendent wings, they seemed to realise the dreams of the Arabs, whose Koran fills their paradise with myriads of these jewelled creatures, placed there by the prophet for the gratification of the true believer.

"Oh!" thought Jacinto, "what a heaven were this spot if those eyes, dark and soft as the lucid orbs of the Houris, were but shining near me—those eyes whose light is quenched for ever just when I had found new life in their rays, and learnt the secret they had so sweetly striven to conceal. Inez—beloved and lost—shall I indeed never behold thee more—and must I drag on a forlorn existence, amidst

these scenes of beauty and harmony, where thou can'st never come."

He cast himself upon the enamelled ground and wept in the bitterness of grief—by degrees the storm of sorrow died away, and again he rose, and tried to calm his feelings.

In a mood half inquiring and half meditative he wandered for several hours, till his interest became entirely awakened to the singularity of his position— he was delighted with all the natural beauties which encreased upon him, but amazed at meeting no inhabitants, and still more so at seeing no wild animals, who, he thought, would naturally seek this secluded shore as their favourite haunt.

His journey was considerably lengthened by following the course of the various bays which washed the coast, and it was high noon before he had gained the northern extremity, where he had observed the islands were nearest which formed the opposite sides of the sound. A new

discovery awaited him, on ascending a slight eminence which overlooked this point of land. In front, the ocean extended itself even to the circle of the horizon, and was shut out to the right and left by the land, not however so completely as to prevent its re-appearance on one or two points where the shore was low or discontinued.

In order to satisfy the doubts which he now began to entertain, he hastily climbed a steep hill, the northern side of which was quite bare of foliage, (a peculiarity which appeared to extend itself all along this coast,) and from hence had a complete survey of the country. He saw that the spot where he now stood was at one end of a long narrow island, apparently nearly twenty miles in length, but of very disproportionate breadth. Beneath him, as he looked in the direction of the land, a broad sheet of water was expanded, whose glassy surface, unruffled by the slightest breeze, reflected

the clear blue heavens as brightly below. The lake, for such it seemed, was so completely surrounded by lofty hills, that it appeared to have no communication with the external sea, though separated in one part by only a strip of land, which could not be a quarter of a mile in breadth. The hills were all covered with the thick, evergreen foliage of the dwarf cedar, interspersed with the feathery cocoa-nut and palmetto; in some instances they sloped gradually down to the water's edge, in others they were terminated abruptly by steep clefts of grey rock, the crevices of which were adorned by numerous creeping plants.

The bosom of the lake was gemmed by many bright islands, the haunt of birds of all descriptions, whose rapid flight and shrill cries, as they skimmed along the surface or hovered above their nests, were the only indications of life in all the scene. Beyond the lake the land stretched in a regular succession of hill and vale till the ocean closed the view. The

prospect was extensive and varied, at least the eye was not fatigued with its uniformity, for the innumerable rocky islets which were scattered along the northern shore, some covered with foliage, others completely bare —the ceaseless dash and foam of the breaking surf and the continued flight of the clouds of sea birds relieved from monotony a scene which betrayed no track of man!

The sea itself, on a closer view, presented an inexhaustible subject of admiration; its waters were so transparent, that, for several fathoms down, its depths could be as clearly discerned as if there were no impediment between them and the gazer's eye. The numerous rocks which were covered at high water, were thickly overgrown with coral of vivid tints and most fantastic shapes; immense *nautili* then appearing a perfect sea wonder, spread their delicate fibres in the greatest luxuriance, gleaming with a purple light beneath the wave as their fairy cars moved to and fro; the golden sands of the

shore were strown with a profusion of shells, as various in form as bright of hue, all of which glittered like scattered jewels in the sun.

Hundreds of little quiet bays overshadowed by high rocks were filled with the mimic squadrons of the above named beautiful shell, the nautilus, and the sight of them, new to the eye of Jacinto, filled him with wondering admiration: further from the shore, basking in the glow of noon, and sleeping tranquilly on the surface of the water, he observed the strange shape of the indolent turtle—considered at that period a prodigy of nature, before its luxurious uses were known: while further still to seaward the *thrasher* and the mighty spouting whale often waged their party war.

All were marvels which he beheld, and all calculated to impress his mind with endless ideas of variety and beauty, surpassing all the store that nature had ever yet collected together.

Fervent and repeated were the lover's prayers

for her he even yet occasionally imagined might be restored to him; tears of despair were dispersed by flashing thoughts of hope and happiness, and in dreamy musings he slowly retrod his steps towards the sound, along the margin of which he once more bent his way towards his lonely hut, where all remained as quiet and secure as he had left it; and shuddering at his unbroken solitude, he entered, wearied in mind and body.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEVERAL days thus passed. Jacinto gradually extended the limits of his excursions, till the locality of the island became familiar to him. He felt assured that there were no native inhabitants, and that the woods, though filled with birds, whose beauty and melody were unrivalled, were entirely devoid of other animals. A stranger peculiarity was yet apparent—not a single rivulet or spring of fresh water had met

his eager search; his own wants he had supplied from the deep recesses of a lofty rock, which rose behind his hut; those cavities were filled by the rain or the dew, which fell from the broad leaves of the banana and other plants growing near. He now determined upon exploring the entire group of islands, as far as lay in his power, in order to relieve his mind from the painful doubts which harassed his waking thoughts and haunted him perpetually in his dreams. He felt himself unable longer to endure the suspense in which he had passed the last few days, and, with a beating heart and a resolution inspired by a reckless indifference to his fate, should his worst fears be verified, he set forth on his enterprise.

The track which he pursued was through a country whose characteristics were widely different from those which marked the parts he had hitherto seen. His course lay to the southward of a high range of hills, which stretched from one end of the island to the

other, and was situated at their feet, close to the sea.

As he proceeded, he recognised, on either side, the sterile and threatening features which had intimidated the sailors from approaching nearer, while coasting the land in the storm. On the right rose the bare, sandy hills, which glared painfully on the sight, unrefreshed by any sign of verdure, save the long straggling fibres of bindweed, which, intersecting his path, entangled his feet, and impeded his progress. On the left, amidst the sullen roar of the breakers, spread an almost interminable sheet of foam, which brought to his recollection too vividly the horrors from which he had escaped, to allow him to gaze on them with any degree of pleasure.

His way, where the sands were too loose to permit of his journeying with ease, lay from time to time across broad ledges of rock, so worn by the dashing wave as to have become completely smooth — the haunt of

divers creatures of the sea, whose rapid flight seemed to show the instinctive dread of almost all animals of the presence of man. No tree nor shrub but the sea-samphire and the prickly pear, grew on this unproductive shore; the velvet leaf of the former had in it something that was attractive, but the purple fruit and golden flower of the latter were small atonement for the difficulties which nature had put in the way of their becoming a source of gratification to the parched and wayworn traveller.

Faint and fatigued with the overpowering heat of the sun—and the intolerable glare, reflected alike from hill and wave—it was with infinite pleasure that Jacinto at length discovered some distant signs of vegetation on the opposite side of a broad sweep of sandy beach. He redoubled his exertions, and approaching nearer, could discern a cluster of trees, whose long flexible boughs bent towards the earth where they again took root like those of the

mangrove. The leaves were broad and thick, and cast an ample shade, and bunches of fruit like grapes, with a flavour scarcely inferior, served to quench his burning thirst as he rested for a time beneath the sea-grape's shadowy branches.

In a short time he was able to renew his journey and continue his progress along the shore, anxiously endeavouring to discover some tokens which might lead him to hope that the boat of the doomed Sea Star had landed in safety. He saw but little cause for supposing such an event probable along the whole extent of the coast he had yet traversed, and before him its aspect was quite as unpromising. The same long line of boiling surf marked the sea, and a continual succession of rocks lined the shore, where not a single harbour offered a prospect of security.

He toiled on, in a painful state of uncertainty throughout the livelong day; and when the shades of evening closed around him, he

found himself at the southern extremity of the island, without having obtained any clue to the object of his search. The aspect of the sea and land were, however, here materially changed for the better. The former, though extremely perilous, from the innumerable rocks which lay concealed beneath its surface, was no longer agitated by the dangerous surf, and afforded a slight hope that the boat had been drifted by a current beyond this point and that the party had perhaps effected a landing.

The shore, as far as the dusk of evening would permit of observation, seemed less barren than along the southern side, and Jacinto therefore made the best of his way towards a high conical hill, whose sides were covered with cedar, which descended so low as to skirt the very margin of the sandy beach. Here he trusted to obtain a tolerable shelter for the night, and succeeded in discovering a quiet, secluded spot, a short distance inland, where the perfume of the orange flower soon

indicated to him the fortunate selection he had made. A large species of fern grew also in abundance, on which he slept till morn, when his slumbers were broken by the shrill yet melodious notes of the scarlet nightingale, warbling amongst the crimson blossoms of the pomegranate.

Jacinto rose and ascended the hill, whose peculiar form he had the night before but indistinctly traced. From hence he observed that a chain of small islands trended still further westward, and that the principal island or mainland was so curved as to form a bay of many miles across, studded with numerous islands, all of which possessed the same attributes of beauty and verdure. It remained for him to pursue his search by endeavouring to gain the one immediately beneath him, and which was separated from the mainland by an exceedingly deep and rapid, though narrow channel. He descended, therefore, to the shore, and saw with pleasure that in a low,

swampy spot, which he had not observed from the hill, there grew a profusion of long thick rushes bearing a close resemblance to the sugar cane, which he conceived could be easily bound together, so as to form a light raft to assist him in crossing the ferry.

Several bundles he accordingly cut down, and fastened with the long roots of the bind-weed: to these he attached three or four branches of the broad palmetto, and having shaped a kind of paddle from the stem of the small cedar, he committed himself and his fragile bark to the impetuous current.

Though wafted far out of the direct track by the force of the stream, Jacinto contrived, with the assistance of his paddle, to bear up against its rapidity, and eventually succeeded in gaining the opposite shore, where in a small sandy nook he stranded his little raft, and drew it up beneath the rocks out of the influence of the tide.

Like the dove from the ark, he "found no

rest for the sole of his foot," till his mission was accomplished; and again he wended his way along a beautiful romantic coast, where the rocks, boldly projecting into the sea, compelled him often to pursue his track through the thicket. He had proceeded about a mile in this manner, when, emerging from a close wood of cedars, he suddenly found himself on the verge of an exceedingly steep and almost perpendicular cliff overhanging the sea, whose ripple he could distinctly hear as it murmured beneath. He did not think that he had been so close to it, and approaching the edge of the cliff, was struck by the appearance of the beach which lay below.

He saw an extent of about two hundred yards of pure white sand, with large fragments of rock scattered close to the water's edge, which, forming a kind of barrier against the waves when the storm was high, seemed intended to preserve it in constant tranquillity.

At each extremity of the beach the land formed a bold promontory, beneath which the deep sea dashed its turbulent billows. The secluded appearance of the little bay excited his attention; and, alive to every impulse of hope, he eagerly strained his eyes to discover if any track of man existed there. From the height where he stood his view was limited to the exterior part of the beach only—much of it, and all directly beneath, being hid from his sight. The receding tide had effaced all marks on the sand, if any such had previously existed, but at one moment, he fancied he could discern something lying beneath the shadow of a huge rock, which strongly resembled a cloak spread out; it might however be merely a heap of sea weed, which in one of nature's sportive moods had been fashioned in the shape of a garment. Whether it were fancy or not he determined, at all events, to explore the sheltered spot, and observing well the distance

of the nearest promontory, he plunged into the thicket, and quickly reappeared at the point he sought.

One glance from hence as he measured the difficulties of the descent with a steady eye, assured him that with a firm foot and a strong hand, he might overcome the apparent danger; and, accustomed from his infancy to the rugged wilds of his native sierras, in a few moments he was rapidly descending the unequal surface of the rock.

By gliding from ledge to ledge, and from point to point, scarcely allowing time for the weight of his body to rest on any particular spot, and availing himself of the sinewy fibres and strong roots of the various shrubs which grew in the fissures of the cliff, he rapidly and safely achieved the perilous descent: though not without disturbing numerous sea fowl, who, brooding peaceably in their nests, and startled at the sudden apparition as he sprung

from rock to rock, flew wildly into the air with piercing cries, and as they circled over his head, clamoured loudly at the untimely interruption.

Regardless of the noise above, Jacinto paused a moment for breath as he scanned the shore he had so anxiously striven to reach. He soon saw enough to realise his most sanguine hopes! not only were there traces of footsteps visible upon the beach beyond the line which the waves usually reached, but near a large aperture in the centre of the cliff were several articles of dress, apparently hung out to dry on the rocks. The front of the cave was obscured by a dark mass of the fallen cliff, so that he could not observe if any one were beyond.

With a beating heart he advanced towards the cavern, and climbing over the shelving rocks which formed the base of the cliff, he turned the angle of the fallen mass, and stood in the mouth of the cave. He however saw

no one, though the smouldering embers of a cedar fire, which spread a delicious perfume on the air, a sailor's jacket, a boat hook, a broken oar, some carpenter's tools, and scattered chips of wood, sufficiently attested the presence of his late comrades, and the nature of their recent occupation.

He proceeded a few steps within the cave, and striking his feet against a heap of something which lay on the ground, he stooped to examine it: his consternation and surprise were extreme when he recognised, though much frayed and damaged by the sea water, the doublet and mantle of the governor, and a scarf, which he too well remembered as having belonged to Dona Inez.

A thousand fears rushed on his mind. And suggested the dreadful probability that they were the sole relics of those in whose welfare he was so deeply interested—of her in whose safety his existence was bound up. A faintness came over him, and he reeled against the

vault to which he for a moment clung. It was but for a single instant; in the next he rushed forward into the cave, calling loudly on the name of Inez.

CHAPTER XV.

The encreasing gloom prevented Jacinto from proceeding more than a few steps at the rapid pace at which he had set out. He advanced therefore more cautiously, and in proportion as his eyes became accustomed to the sombre light he was enabled to distinguish the principal features of the cavern. He stopped not to admire the beauties of the pendant stalactites which encrusted the roof, but following a kind of natural pathway groped his way down a rugged descent

and found himself in a spacious vault, the floor of which was almost artificially smooth and even; by the garments and implements which lay scattered about the cave, evidently relics saved from the wreck, he judged that this was the abode of the boat's crew; yet all was deserted, and he sought vainly round for further indications of the presence of Inez; a narrow outlet or passage was just visible, and feeling his way along the dim cavity, he continued to climb in darkness, often stumbling against the slippery fragments of rock, which the want of light prevented his avoiding.

On a sudden, a faint gleam appeared to struggle through the obscurity, it became gradually more perceptible, and in a short time he could distinguish the clear sunshine streaming down upon the cavern from a wide fissure in the roof, the mouth of which was nearly overgrown with fern and flowering shrubs.

Never was the light of day more welcome to imprisoned captive than it now shone upon

Jacinto, though astonishment at the scene he encountered, for an instant suspended his faculties. He had barely attained the summit of the pathway which had let him to this illumined cavern when a voice struck on his ear which chained him to the spot with joy, amazement and agitation. It was the voice of Inez, but not soft, low, and gentle as she was wont to speak, some powerful emotion appeared to agitate her, and terror had changed her tones of music to shrill, harsh accents as she exclaimed.

"Don Gaspar, is this the return for my father's confidence—is this the proof of the attachment you pretend for me—now that death, a fearful death, has taken from me my only support—now that my beloved parent can no longer protect his child I am made the object of insult and dishonourable importunity. Let shame, Don Gaspar, if not humanity induce you to forbear; before these fatal events, I repeat it, you possessed not my affection—

and my resolve was, as the good father has confirmed to you, should we have reached the shores of that country we sought, to devote myself to the service of Heaven—but not to have been your bride—your conduct since, might well confirm me in the resolution."

"Your devotion, fair Inez," returned a voice which Jacinto at once recognised as that of Gaspar, "is no doubt deep and sincere, but methinks it is rather helped by your regret at the loss of that minion for whom I know your tears have flowed more than for your father's death. Have you no shame—have you not cause to blush at having encouraged the addresses of a low born adventurer whom my uncle was weak enough to admit too near his daughter, whose care for her own honour was so slight.

"No," returned Inez, "I have no cause for shame—and though the love of Don Jacinto was never avowed, my sole regret is that before fate snatched him from me I had not declared

to the best and most generous of men the deep attachment that his virtues had inspired in my breast. Leave me, Don Gaspar, let me at least have the poor privilege of solitude and tears since hope and happiness may never more be mine."

"Both are in your power," said Don Gaspar tauntingly, "even in this desert the means are not wanting to make you legally my wife—the good father Lopez shall join our hands, since you think the ceremony necessary, but mine you shall be, fair cousin—under all circumstances."

"The worthy priest, who has vainly striven to awaken your mind to proper feeling," replied Inez indignantly, "would not consent to bless a union so ill assorted, and my heart refuses and revolts at all communion with one so lost to truth and honour."

Don Gaspar laughed bitterly. "I am weary of this contempt and folly," cried he, "hear me, Inez, "I am so far undeserving of your

harshness that I am ready to go through the mummery which the priest may perform. Father Lopez shall be sent to you forthwith —consider together what will be your best course—for by the light of heaven I swear this night you shall be mine."

As he spoke he rushed from the cave by an opening beneath that by which Jacinto had entered, leaving Inez in an agony of tears, and before her lover could execute his rash intent of springing on him, and detaining the ruffianly tyrant, whose words he had heard rapidly uttered as he made his way towards the opening which he hoped might lead him to her presence.

Scarcely had Don Gaspar left the cave, when, by a sudden spring, Jacinto disengaged himself from the rugged stones which his hasty movement had dislodged, and which fell around him as he leaped from a projection and threw himself at the feet of Inez.

Amazed, terrified and overjoyed the unfortunate girl had presence of mind to repress the

shriek which rose to her lips—she gazed with wild delight for one moment, and in the next was clasped in the arms of Don Jacinto.

All that he had endured, hardship, danger, coldness, contempt, sorrow and despair that one instant could repay:—the gloomy cavern was to his mind filled with the light of happiness, the frowning rocks, the dark abysms which yawned around seemed shining with the radiance of eternal joy—he held her to his breast—she wept on his bosom—she clung to him with unreprest fondness, with confiding tenderness—she entreated him to save her, and she suffered his embrace!

"Inez," he murmured, "can I believe that Heaven has reserved for me such bliss as this! when abandoned to despair to find myself at the very pinnacle of earthly happiness—to hear words which only in my dreams I dared to imagine—to feel the certainty of your love and my unthought of happiness!"

"Jacinto," she exclaimed, starting from his

arms, "he will return—you are in danger—selfish that I am, you will be exposed for my sake—fly, fly while yet there is time—he goes but to seek the good father whom he has cruelly treated for defending me—I hear his step even now—Oh, holy Mother!—must I bring destruction on all who love me!"

"Inez, adored—beloved—I am armed—imagine not," cried Jacinto, "that I would abandon you but with my life—let the coward fear *me*—let him dare to meet my arm, and if Heaven is the defender of innocence you are saved."

Scarcely had he spoken when footsteps were heard. Jacinto supporting the fainting Inez to a recess in the rock drew his cutlass and rushed forward at the instant that Don Gaspar appeared leading, or rather dragging forward a reverend man whose dress bespoke his sacred character, and who was uttering the language of entreaty as he was rudely urged forward.

"Traitor!" exclaimed Jacinto, as he confronted

his rival at the entrance of the cave, "answer to me, to Don Jacinto de Lera, for your conduct to the daughter of Don Christoval your uncle —draw, miscreant, and defend the life I scorn to take, although your crimes deserve that you should be treated like the slave you are."

A deadly paleness succeeded the convulsive start of Don Gaspar as he gazed, with starting eyes, upon the form before him;—a shivering seized his frame, and he had no power to draw the sword which hung by his side.

"Who art thou?" he exclaimed, "what phantom from the ocean's depth come to brave me with threats which I defy—stand back, if you are mortal, and bar not my passage."

"Coward," cried Jacinto, "well may you shrink at the visions of your conscience. I am a man whom Heaven has sent to be the defender of innocence—draw while there is yet time, or my steel shall teach you that no ghost from the grave is before you."

"Minion!" exclaimed Don Gaspar gasping

with fury and ill-recovered terror as he drew his sword and darted on his rival—"let this, then, make thee what thou seemest to my astonished sight—go, boast in the grave of the seduction of a woman, worthless as thyself, and scarcely less hated by me!"

So saying, they met in deadly contest—reckless fury on the one hand and on the other resolute courage nerving the arms of each; while enmity guided the weapon of either combatant to seek his adversary's heart;—the strife was not long—both were more intent on injuring each other than careful of self defence, and blood soon flowed from each; but Jacinto, exasperated at the recollection of the wrongs of Inez, who now lay senseless, perhaps lifeless, on the arms of the monk, collecting all his force, struck down Don Gaspar's guard; he staggered back a few steps, and before he had time to recover himself, Jacinto made a desperate thrust and passed his sword through the body of his

antagonist, who fell to the earth, uttering a deep groan.

Jacinto sprang towards Dona Inez and caught her from the supporting priest, who uttered prayers of joy at the result of the combat.

"We must be gone," exclaimed he, when the first agitation was past, "the rest of the party will probably soon return, and they are devoted creatures of their infamous leader, and would show us no mercy. Together we can doubtless support the lady—I am aged, but still strong, and my arm may yet do service."

"Thanks, good father," cried Jacinto, "we will lose no time—let us bear her to the entrance of the cave, the air may revive her."

So saying he carried her in his arms along the opening, following the priest, to whom a readier way was known than that by which Jacinto had entered, for the cavern branched in many directions. With the dripping waters of the rock he sprinkled her pallid features while he bent over her in breathless anxiety. In a short

time symptoms of reviving animation began to appear. Inez opened her dark eyes and gazing wildly round clung instinctively to Don Jacinto's mantle and shaded her face with her hands.

"Hide me—oh, hide me from him!" she exclaimed, "away Morales, approach me not—I have yet a dagger—but the grave will give him up to defend me—my father! Jacinto!"

With hysterical cries she sunk back into insensibility but soon involuntary murmurs and low sighs succeeded, and presently tears began to force themselves through her long black lashes—and she opened her eyes gazing with consciousness on her deliverer. A few hasty words were all he dared to utter in explanation of her anxious and confused enquiries—with a sudden effort she recovered herself and at once seemed to comprehend the peculiarity of their position.

"Oh let us be gone!" she cried out, "danger and terror lurk here—good father, dear Jacinto, I am safe with you, but delay may destroy us

—I am strong now—I can exert myself, fear not for me, but let us leave this hideous place instantly."

They advanced cautiously in the direction of the light which gleamed at a distance, and in much shorter time than Jacinto had taken to reach the centre cavern they found themselves at its entrance. Whither to turn now Jacinto knew not—to ascend the cliff with Inez seemed impossible, but Lopez reassured him by observing that at certain periods of the tide the waves receded within a few yards of the narrow opening which formed an arch between the rocks of the promontory—this was now the case, and though there was sufficient peril in the attempt it was worth the trial. They therefore, with Inez borne between them, waded nearly breast high till the aperture was passed, and they were at length once more safely on shore, when they resumed their flight without a moment's pause.

The heights were gained and the narrow

channel reached where Jacinto's slender raft lay hidden beneath the rocks. The force of the current was now exhausted with the ebb of the tide, and the passage was more direct and easy than it had been before; partly by wading and swimming, and partly by clinging to the raft on which he had placed the monk and Inez, Jacinto managed, though with extraordinary exertion, to pilot them across.

Once arrived on the opposite shore the knowledge that a barrier of water, which a few hours would render still more effectual, existed between them and their foes, suggested to the fugitives for the first time a sense of comparative security, and they offered up their fervent prayers together for their deliverance so far. Inez now consented to recline beneath the shadowy branches of a spreading tamarind, while Jacinto gathered for her the glowing clusters of the orange and pomegranate. He then recounted to her the almost miraculous manner in which he had been preserved from

the wreck, and besought her to explain the circumstances which had led to the situation in which he found her.

Her story was soon told. They had fortunately escaped the dangers of the sea, and had run the boat ashore below the cave. An accident in landing proved fatal to the governor, enfeebled by exertion and the privations of the voyage, his strength and spirits had failed him, and as he was endeavouring to leave the boat, becoming giddy, he missed his footing and fell heavily on a sharp projecting fragment of rock, which inflicted a severe wound on his head, and stretched him senseless on the shore. Inez remembered no more till she found herself in the interior vault of the cavern, lying beside her father, who still breathed; around him were the crew and Don Gaspar.

The pain of the wound, joined to the violent exertions which Don Christoval had made, brought on a high fever, and no medical assist-

ance being available he expired on the second day in the arms of his daughter, remaining in a state of delirium to the last, which prevented his being conscious of his situation. Deep was the grief of Dona Inez when she was aware that she clasped a lifeless corse, and wildly she called on Heaven to end her miseries by death. Yet, despite her mental agony and the extreme bodily pain which she had endured, the principle of life remained as strong as ever. The pious consolations administered to her since, by the excellent father Lopez, who was saved with them, being the only one of his brethren preserved, though many had accompanied the expedition, restored her mind to some degree of calmness, although her absorbing grief prevented her for some time from noticing external things, and she was scarcely conscious how time had flown: something she remembered of their separating her from her father's body, and of their bearing him to his grave on the sea shore.

An event had however occurred which awoke her from her terrific dream to a more painful reality. The conduct of Don Gaspar had been marked by strange peculiarities ; since the moment of their leaving the ship his manner had entirely changed from the haughty reserve he had hitherto displayed to a coarse and familiar habit which he appeared to assume, in order more completely to gain over the crew to his command, whom Inez could not but observe consisted of the most daring and licentious of the seamen on board.

She was herself too much absorbed in grief to notice his behaviour during her father's brief illness, but it had not escaped father Lopez that less attention was paid to the sick man's state than the ties of blood and friendship, and the dues of his rank should have exacted, and he had also remarked with anxiety the manner assumed towards Dona Inez by her cousin, and the general reckless tone adopted by him.

Shocked at the want of feeling of Don

Gaspar which by degrees became too apparent to the unhappy daughter of Don Christoval she looked upon him now with a disgust which she could scarcely conceal, and which caused him at length to throw off the mask and exhibit without disguise the worst features of his character.

At first she tried to understand his familiar manner towards her as a rude attempt to offer the consolation she had a right to expect from a relative who now remained her only natural protector on earth; but as the sentiments of Don Gaspar developed themselves, she became aware that although speciously concealed under the cloak of obeying her father's wishes in their future union, it was evident that he entertained views of her becoming his by a less solemn and more dissoluble tie than marriage in case she refused to consent to the celebration of their nuptials by father Lopez, which he abruptly proposed.

Inez, with many blushes, here confessed to

Jacinto, who listened with tender delight, that the remembrance of him was, in fact, the real cause of her repugnance to her cousin, although he had, at all times, been the object of her dislike—and having made him happy by this assurance she left to father Lopez to recount all the persecutions they had both endured from the tyranny and brutality of the unworthy Gaspar.

In vain the priest represented to him the crime he was committing in insisting on Dona Inez giving him her hand when she had expressly told him of her repugnance to his addresses—in vain he urged him by her father's memory to respect her sorrow and leave her to repose—to allow her delay at least, and to wait till a change of fortune should remove them from their present position. All was in vain, and every argument but served to exasperate the evil passions of Don Gaspar: the certainty he had obtained of her attachment to Jacinto goaded him almost to madness, and the final

scene, in which the latter had been so efficient an actor, had been the consequence of his violent determination.

In the midst of all the grief, indignation and terror for Inez which Jacinto experienced as he heard this relation, a feeling of happiness predominated as he became aware, so unequivocally, of the attachment of the beautiful object of his devotion towards himself, and his eloquent looks as well as words thanked her for the blissful revelation.

After a short repose Inez found herself sufficiently recovered to pursue their journey, which they hastened to do, being anxious to encrease as much as possible the distance between them and those whom they naturally considered as their enemies. Avoiding the coast, they therefore struck across the island to the shore of the great sound, where the surpassing beauty of the scenery inspired Inez with amazed delight.

Jacinto had now an opportunity of judging

more accurately of the general shape of the land, and was able to direct their course more immediately towards the spot where he hoped to place Inez in security. Their journey was not however performed in one day, Inez, exhausted with the unusual fatigue, being obliged to halt frequently to recover her strength.

On these occasions Jacinto carefully chose the shadiest and most retired spots; and while Inez rested, he sought for the finest fruits which the thick covert afforded, of which there was abundance and of varied description.

In the evening, when to proceed was no longer practicable, and the mild beauty of the moonlight made it a pleasure to sleep in its beams, Inez hesitated not to make her couch on a thick bed of fern in the midst of a fragrant orange grove, secured from the damps of night by a cloak which Jacinto spread on the boughs above: while he and the good priest, after carefully examining every avenue of the thicket, stationed themselves by turns in such

a position without, as to be at hand on the slightest emergency, and able to guard against any danger that might menace her from the exterior.

In this manner he permitted himself a few hours' slumber, the zeal of father Lopez seconding him so well, and during the stillness of midnight dreamt over again his joy and good fortune.

Long before the sun rose he was again hovering round the grove, watching, while the priest slept, for their safety. Against Inez should wake he had made preparations for a delicious repast; he gathered the guava, pomegranate, fig, custard apple and banana fresh with the morning dew glittering like crystal on their stems.

He had attentively admired the singular appearance of a wide spreading tree, beneath the shelter of whose complicated branches he had passed the night, and observing that it bore a large, round, green fruit, the rind of which was

perfectly hard, he scooped out the interior and formed a vessel sufficiently capacious to hold water enough for the day's journey, a supply of which he found in the hollow of the rocks. He also cut down a branch of the palmetto, whose broad, fan-like shape served to keep off the ardent rays of the sun, and the length of its slender stalk rendered it perfectly convenient to carry. In short he was prodigal of every attention which could make Inez forget the loneliness of her situation, and he watched over her slightest want with the tenderest anxiety.

The second and third days passed like the first. By day they proceeded slowly along the fertile glades of the island, keeping as much as possible to the low grounds for fear of observation should their enemies be on their track: and at night the place of rest was secured with the same degree of watchfulness on the part of Jacinto and the good father.

The thoughts of her lover were continually

bent on preventing Inez from dwelling on the misfortunes of the past, and from time to time he would point out to her some new beauty of the tropical scenery, and remind her of its accidental resemblance to some view in their native Spain, connected in memory with many wild and wonderful traditions. At another moment objects so entirely new as to excite their mutual astonishment beguiled the way of its tediousness, and excited them to go on without being so thoroughly sensible to the inevitable fatigue.

On the evening of the third day they had gained the opposite side of the broad lake already described, and that night Dona Inez reposed beneath the rude hut which Jacinto had built.

CHAPTER XVI.

Leaving Dona Inez in safety for the present in her novel abode, it is necessary to return to Don Gaspar, left for dead on the floor of the cavern. The dispersed crew had, at intervals, returned from their several excursions; highly successful; the landsmen were heavily laden with the produce of the woods and the eggs of the turtle, which abounded along the coast; the fishing party had tried the shore and made several lucky hauls, for the fish were not only in great plenty but apparently very fine; and

if colour could tempt the appetite the wide range of the ocean bed had produced nothing more brilliant and alluring than those which they now triumphantly displayed.

Preparations were begun for the general meal, and, in the mean time, one of the party ascended to the interior cavern to intimate to Don Gaspar the result of their morning's excursion, and report the observations they had made on the appearance of the islands. He had been absent about a minute when the rest of the crew were disturbed from their busy employment by loud shouts from their comrade, and the hollow vaults re-echoed to the cry of "Murder!"

Hastily seizing arms and torches they rushed in a body up the gloomy passage, and on reaching the cavern found their companion leaning over the bleeding body of Don Gaspar, which he endeavoured to raise to see if life were quite extinct. They perceived that his principal wound was in the right side, where the weapon

had passed apparently clean through; but on a closer examination they could distinguish the regular pulsations of his heart, which gave them hopes.

To lose their leader was a misfortune greatly to be dreaded, and their consternation was extreme when they beheld his situation: he was gently raised from the ground and deposited with care on the bed of rushes which Inez had formerly occupied, and by the assistance of the cold water distilled through the earth into the cavern, with which they plentifully besprinkled his face, and washed the blood from his wound, in a few minutes he gave symptoms of returning animation.

Though unskilled in the science of medicine, and unable to take precautions against the effects of fever, as in the case of Don Christoval, there was one of the crew whose course of life had familiarised him with the nature of flesh wounds, and ascertaining that the sword of Don Gaspar's antagonist had fortunately

passed below his ribs, avoiding a vital part, he sent some of the men to search for certain herbs to apply to the wound, and tasked the scanty remains of linen they yet possessed to supply him with bandages.

It was no feeling of attachment which caused their zeal in his service, but they were aware of his skill and activity, and they had depended on him for the execution of plans they had formed: for although men of enterprise, as far as depended on physical strength and courage, they wanted that confidence in themselves and each other which they acknowledged in a mind of a higher order. They therefore set to work with diligence to do all in their power to render him assistance: their chief source of anxiety was now to ascertain the cause of their finding Don Gaspar in his wounded state, and it was with secret sensations of dread that they questioned each other on the mysterious occurrence.

Don Gaspar at length spoke, but it was only faintly; and at first they imagined that he was

under the influence of delirium as he repeated little save the names of Don Jacinto and Dona Inez.

It was now, for the first time, that they noticed her absence, and, questioning Don Gaspar more closely, they were enabled to ascertain, as he gradually recovered strength, the circumstances, as far as he knew them or chose to relate, of Jacinto's sudden appearance. It was not necessary for him to affect a disguise which the crew could easily penetrate—he had no fear of exciting their disgust had he chosen to confess his intentions respecting Inez: they were, as he knew, men in whom the scruples of guilt had long since disappeared, and their thoughts were only bent on the means of recovering their lost prize and avenging the outrage, they were pleased to consider which had been made on their chief. The promise of a future reward was not thrown away upon them, but stimulated them still farther than their own reckless love of violence, to obey the expressed wishes of Don Gaspar.

The question to be considered was whether Don Jacinto was alone, or accompanied by a party which might make their own safety precarious. The traces on the sea-shore, which were carefully examined, showed only the marks of the feet of two persons, whom they rightly conjectured to be those of the monk and Jacinto, a third was so light and small that they readily recognized it as that of Dona Inez.

The supposed companions might have wandered about the island, and two of the men were sent out to reconnoitre if any stragglers were visible; others pursued the track along the shore, and easily divining the exit which the fugitives had made, they crept through the natural arch of the rock, and again fell on their track on the beach. On a sudden it disappeared, but was again recovered on the height above, though the loose sand which led upwards bore such indistinct marks that they doubted if they were actually the print of footsteps. The broken twigs and trampled grass and flowers sufficiently marked their progress through the

wood, and they succeeded in following the *trail* till they arrived at the small sandy nook from whence Jacinto and his companions had embarked. Here they were again at fault for the current was running too strong and deep to admit of their supposing that it had been forded. They knew that the fugitives had no boat or indeed the time to construct one since the wreck, supposing them to be possessed of the materials.

A closer observation of the opposite shore convinced them that in some respects they had erred, for as the tide encroached it had gradually floated the raft which had been left on the sand, and pointed out the means of escape. This was all they could ascertain, and with this intelligence they returned to Don Gaspar, whom they now found able to sit up and enter more particularly into the details of the accident.

The men who had sought through the woods made their reappearance also, and declared that no signs of stragglers existed either on land or shore.

Their hope was now increased almost to certainty that Jacinto was alone, and it was resolved that four of the men should arm themselves and proceed in the boat in search of the fugitives, if possible securing Don Jacinto alive, though cautioned not to be over scrupulous in killing him should he offer any determined resistance; the priest, as he was aged, they considered no formidable adversary, even supposing him to have been the companion of the flight of the lovers.

The few remaining men staid with Don Gaspar to tend his wounds and minister to his wants, though he much regretted his inability to conduct the search in person. His strength, however was unequal to the task, and he therefore resigned it in the hope of gratifying his vengeance through the fidelity of his adherents.

The sun had long passed his meridian height and was travelling brightly towards the west, while a gentle breeze just rippled the surface of the waters, when Jacinto proposed to Dona Inez to visit the shore of the sound and explore

the beauties which were yet unknown to her. Inez consented, and leaning on Jacinto's arm, they wandered along the sandy margin, lingering occasionally to remark the sudden appearance of the flying fish, or to listen to the notes of the mocking bird, as the woods re-echoed to his imitative melody. At length they paused, and seating themselves on the trunk of a fallen cedar, which had been overthrown by the violence of the winds, they mutually gazed in silence on the curling waves and sparkling isles which glittered before them.

"Inez," said Jacinto at length, "how little did my most sanguine dreams image forth a reality like to this, when, by the light of a moon bright as we may behold in these remote latitudes, I dared beneath your lattice to breathe my love—you knew not who it was who then presumed, masked by that mysterious shade, to tell a secret he had not the power to conceal—you slept unconscious and uncaring while I whole nights have watched your dwelling place

and turned away at length in solitary grief. As well, I have said, might the glowworm entreat a spark of light from the star that shines above him as I ever hope for a kind glance from her whom I dare to love—alas! what a strange fate has altered our positions!—how much have we to deplore, but oh! Inez, let me hear from your own lips that you feel, like me, that we have also much to rejoice at. Confirm, I entreat, the half assurance you have given me, that I am not indifferent to you, and make me indeed as happy as man can be in this ever changing world."

"Jacinto," said Inez, "concealment is useless in our circumstances—you are my only friend on earth, to you I owe every thing, but I almost regret it because it may seem that gratitude in return is all I feel for you—it is not so, for, strange as it is to myself, before I had received from you a single benefit, before I knew your generosity, your devotion, your courage and your virtues, you were as dear to me as now.

I should be to blame to hide from you that which is the only reward I have to offer for all you have endured for me— know then that I never heard your nightly serenades with indifference, that the sound of your voice the very first time it fell upon my ear touched a chord which answered in my heart, that the first time we casually met in the church of Santo Paolo I was irresistibly drawn towards you as by a spell—it seemed to me as if we had often met before, as if I had told you all my hopes and cares, as if you understood my looks and I your's—I felt that nothing could surprise me that I heard of you, our souls seemed so intimately aequainted, and even when you appeared at St. Luccar de Barrameda, and addressed my dear father as a stranger, I experienced little surprise, for I had anticipated that you would act thus. When the boat in which I was borne away separated me from you in so terrible a manner I then indeed gave up all hope of ever beholding you again, but Heaven has otherwise

willed it, and now I feel no fear. I am convinced that we are guarded, watched over, and that our misfortunes are at an end."

"Sweet prophetess!" cried Jacinto, "is not also the presence of the good father another proof of what you say? Forgive me, dearest Inez, for urging a measure which the uncertainty of our fate renders imperious—give me a right more than that of my simple affection, to defend you—let father Lopez join our hands, and let me thus feel a security which until then is not confirmed."

Inez answered by placing her hand in his, though she turned away her eyes as she did so, and her beautiful cheek was covered with blushes. At that instant a shrill whistle, which seemed to be directly behind them, made them both start. Jacinto was instantly on his feet—he gazed rapidly round, but saw nothing—a second whistle however immediately answered to the first, and a hoarse voice replied with a lengthened halloo to the acknowledged signal.

Inez became deadly pale as she clung to the arm of Jacinto, for she doubted not but that they were discovered, and it required all her lover's assurances to preserve her presence of mind, as again they sought safety in flight.

It was fortunate for them on this occasion that Jacinto's local knowledge was better than that of his pursuers. He had more than once, when alone, taken particular notice of a deep cave, not far distant from the spot where they now were. The entrance was partially hid by a large calabash tree, and in the emergency of the moment, he trusted that the cave might remain unnoticed, should the miscreants who sought them pass by the tree. It was, at any rate, their only place of refuge, and hither they accordingly bent their steps. The spot was soon reached, and with cautious tread they prepared to descend the deepening gloom of the cavern. The extreme darkness rendered this both difficult and dangerous; but by a great exertion, Jacinto succeeded in placing

Inez in safety for the present, for he rejoiced to find an impenetrable veil of gloom was spread within, entirely concealing all objects, while those without were distinctly visible. They had not long secured this place of retreat before the sounds which they had already heard were renewed, and, as it seemed, approached nearer and nearer. Inez trembled with irrepressible terror, but the consciousness that Jacinto was at her side, sustained her fainting courage. Deeper into the gloomy recess did he lead her, and while she cowered beneath a projecting ledge, he kept his eye steadily fixed on the space beyond, illumined by the setting sunlight.

Closer and closer came the voices, and presently he perceived four men slowly emerging from the wood, who assembled on the greensward in front of the tree. To judge from their language it appeared that they were in high ill humour at their unsuccessful search, and that they liked the undertaking the less

from the superstitious fears they entertained of meeting the spirits of evil in the dark and lonely glades which they considered their natural abode.

Communing thus with each other, they drew nearer to the cave, and as the evening was closing in, it was with strange sensations of uneasiness and curiosity that Jacinto and Inez heard them propose to pass the night on the spot, a suggestion which was unanimously agreed to. Having arranged this matter, two of their number prepared to seek for some provisions and cooking materials, which had been left in their boat, in a small creek, not far distant. In a short time they returned, laden with fish, fruits, and vegetables, and bearing also a substantial flagon of wine, which the neighbourhood of Cadiz boasted, even at that early period. A few small casks of this cordial had been included amongst the various articles which were hastily thrown into the boat, when she left the wreck, and had been

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revel, for such seemed the probable tendency of their meal. Jacinto wrapped his cloak round Inez to protect her from the chill of the wet vault, and she leaned back in silence endeavouring to seek repose in thoughts of hope, however far removed, and in secret prayers for protection, while her lover attentively watched the proceedings of the crew.

Their appearance was somewhat striking and by no means re-assuring. The principal figure amongst them was a tall, strong-built man in the prime of life, with a visage the natural dark hue of which was encreased almost to blackness from constant exposure to a burning sun, and the discolouring effect of wind and wave. His hair and long moustaches were coal black; the former fell in uncombed wildness on his shoulders, and the latter were twisted till they more resembled the bristles of the pard than any other human attribute. His doublet and the other parts of his dress were much frayed by constant wear, and a long,

sharp *cuchilla* glittered unsheathed beneath his broad, leathern belt. The only thing which he wore in the least approaching to ornament was a large, embossed silver whistle, which was suspended from his neck by a chain of the same material. A heavy cutlass, a mantle and a dark overshadowing hat, which encreased the sinister expression of his countenance, completed the portrait of Diego Pacheco, heretofore master-at-arms of the good ship the Sea Star.

The dress of his companions was, in most respects, the same as his own; all were similarly armed, and one also wore a whistle. They were men whose stature was somewhat below the common height, but all were thickset and muscular, and had evidently been long familiar with the hardships of life. A reckless expression characterised the countenances of all, and had they been met with on the Sierra Morena few would have doubted their profession as lawless brigands of the most relentless character. Two of these men were brothers, Pedro and Alvarez

Beltran, Arragonians, from the banks of the Ebro; the fourth was a native of Biscay. All of them were well known for the daring boldness of their dispositions, though report said it had not always been exercised in the pursuit of justifiable objects.

Such were the beings who now sat within a few yards of those whom they had sought for six successive days, their naturally violent tempers considerably aggravated by the disappointment they had experienced, and under the additional stimulus of the strong wine of Xeres, which was quickly passed, in a large horn cup, from hand to hand.

The light of day had now completely disappeared and with it the faint breeze which had gently stirred the waters. The air was close and heavy, and flashes of summer lightning occasionally streaked the horizon. In order to clear the atmosphere, as well as to enliven the scene, large branches of cedar were hewn down and cast on the fire, which threw out a vivid

light, and illumined features whose dusky aspect was best seen under its influence.

Jacinto watched the group with intense anxiety, more particularly as they began by degrees to enter into conversation respecting the object of their search. He listened attentively and soon found that he formed the principal theme of their discourse.

"A pretty wild chase we've had," exclaimed the elder Beltran, after draining the full cup which he now passed to his neighbour, "a pretty chase and a successful one! by the bones of St. Jago, but that I saw and felt the wounds of our leader, Don Gaspar, I should have been tempted to think his imagination alone had conjured up the appearance of this same Don Jacinto; here, for six long days, have we hunted through bush and covert, on open ground and over blue water, and the devil a trace have we met with since we saw that cockleshell of rushes, which after all I doubt if a Christian man could ever sail in, let alone a woman!"

"Doubt as you will," said Pacheco, "your belief in the holiest matters has never been of the strongest; we must make a clean search through the island, whether we take back the skin of the wolf or have our labour for our pains. I would we could fall on them were it only to have some compensation for the loss of time we undergo on this cursed shore: I promise you the *chica* should be taught better manners than to escape a second time, and for the Senor Hidalgo, a home thrust and a berth amongst the coral rocks to sleep off its effects would be care enough to take of him."

"But," interrupted Alvarez, "did not Don Gaspar say we were to bring him back alive?"

"Aye, man," replied the other, "he *said* so, but what then? you don't suppose he wished it? He told me to *take care* of him, and he knows my tenderness. I learnt something of that in the Holy Office at Seville. The servants of St. Dominic send *heretics* to Heaven in pity of their sins and I think we need not be scrupu-

lous in doing the same for an *old Christian*. Pass on the cup, Alvarez, I never think of the *auto da fè* but I feel thirsty; and the blaze before us is no bad emblem either, pity we have no rogue with a *san benito* to make the thing complete."

"I think," said the Biscayian, breaking silence, "were this Jacinto found he could furnish no better sport than feeding the fire, which burns out a thought too fast with this dry, crackling wood."

"Well argued, my mountain friend," cried Pacheco, "prithee raise thy lazy limbs from the ground and cut down some of these rustling branches. I have fancied half-a-dozen times I felt some one at my ear, when the breeze, which is just getting up, has shaken the withered leaves."

"The Biscayan rose, and drawing out his long knife, advanced to a low, bending palmetto which grew close to the mouth of the cave, and severed two or three of the long dead branches

which hung idly down; as he stooped to pick them up, a flash of lightning gleamed stronger than before, and he saw, or fancied he saw, something move within the chasm, which he now, for the first time, noticed. Superstitious as his countrymen always are, he instantly conceived that the yawning rift contained more than was meet for mortal to encounter, but the fear of ridicule kept him silent, and he hastily collected the bundle of dry leaves and quickly returned to the circle round the fire. Though he uttered no remark the bloodless hue of his cheeks and lips plainly told that something had agitated him. Pacheco observed it and passed him the flask with a sneer, desiring him to borrow a little colour from the cup to dye his lips red again, for he looked as if he had seen a ghost. The man drank the wine and sullenly replied—" Master Diego might jeer as much as he pleased, but there were many things less wonderful than such a sight if they only chose to look amongst the rocks and thickets. How

do you know," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, "but that these cursed islands are peopled with demons, and it may be we have *supped in the mouth of Hell!*"

The two brothers shuddered as he uttered the last words, but Pacheco exclaimed—

"Come, friend, this is no time for fookery, if you *have* seen anything, speak out, and be it Devil or Don, here's one, at least, will boldly face it. Speak man, or are you like a sealed wine skin, that must be pricked to let out its contents?" He showed his dagger as he spoke. The Biscayan, less moved at the threat implied than indignant at his contemptuous remark, stretched out his arm and pointed in the direction of the cavern, where he doubted not, he said, that Pacheco would find that to cool his courage if he durst venture to assay it.

The ruffian to whom he spoke was naturally of a temperament which was a stranger to fear, and the wine he had drunk had served to influence passions seldom under much controul: he

raised himself hastily from the trunk of the tree against which he was lounging, and reiterated his former declaration by a deep oath as he gazed in the direction indicated by the Biscayan.

CHAPTER X.

The lightning, as is not infrequent in tropical climates, and especially in these islands, had changed from the broad, faint flashes which had marked its first appearance to a stronger and more lurid gleam, and was now accompanied by peals of thunder, which nearing the stormy shore, rolled louder as it approached.

As Pacheco turned, the flame of the fire was subdued beneath the mightier glare of the lightning, and rock, tree and shrub were clearly and minutely developed. The cave was for the

moment distinctly visible, and its recesses so far exposed as to make Pacheco swear that he also beheld something which resembled an upright figure within.

He rose with the determination of exploring the cavern, and Jacinto heard the fruitless expostulations of his comrades endeavouring to dissuade him from the attempt. He now prepared himself for the worst, and, blocking up the narrow entrance where Inez was reclined, he bared his sword, resolving to defend her to the last.

The voice of Pacheco was loud in his demand for a torch, and Jacinto listened in breathless anxiety while they manufactured one from the dry palmetto branches. A bright corruscation of light, which flickered far and wide, showed him that they had succeeded, and he steadily observed the approach of Pacheco towards the cave, followed at a distance by his less resolute companions.

Pacheco advanced to the mouth of the chasm,

and, thrusting the torch within the vault, his eager glance encountered that of Don Jacinto, whom he saw standing within a few yards of him; and, uttering a cry of exultation, he turned for an instant towards his companions, as he waved his sword preparatory to his leaping into the cave. That instant was, however, decisive of his fate; his cutlass gleamed high in the air, as the face of Heaven was involved in one broad sheet of flame. Quicker than thought it was attracted to the steel; the weapon shivered in his hand, and he fell to the earth a blackened corse, while a terrific peal of thunder shook the island to its centre.

His comrades gazed for a moment in horror and consternation, then fled from the scene of death winged by the fear of all that was unearthly and terrible. They reached their boat, and, heedless of the darkness of the night, they ceased not rowing till the scene of their fatal adventure was many miles behind. The night continued stormy, but towards morning it sub-

sided: they continued, however, to strain every nerve to return to the shore where they had left Don Gaspar; and, by pursuing a course directly across the broad sound which shaped the mainland into the form of a crescent, by nightfal they had accomplished their object.

They found Don Gaspar nearly recovered from the effects of his wounds, and cursing the inaction in which he remained. At any other period they would not have dared to relate the ill success of their expedition: but impressed with terror at the supernatural death of their comrade, their fears obtained the mastery over every other feeling and they declared that no consideration should induce them to renew the search, or even remain any longer on these shores, deserted by all save the powers of evil, one moment longer than was necessary to lay in sufficient stock to prosecute their hazardous enterprise of attempting to discover land further to the westward, where, if they failed to realise the bright hopes which had led them

from Spain they might at least meet with a seaman's death.

Don Gaspar's rage was violent when he found that his project had failed; but, deprived of his trustiest associate, and in a manner which the superstitious sailors related as even more terrible than it really was, he was from necessity compelled to listen to their demands, the rather that they were able to give no account whatever of the fugitives. They had coasted the island throughout the range of the whole interior shore, and had carefully examined the land from time to time wherever it appeared to offer the means of concealment. Occasionally two of the crew had proceeded for some hours by land, while the others remained in the boat, in which they also examined every creek and bay, as far as they could; but up to the period of the halt beneath the calabash tree, not a single token had they met with to give them any hope of success. They began therefore, not unreasonably, to conclude that the party they were in

search of had been engulphed in the torrent on attempting to pass it on the raft which had betrayed their passage, or had fallen into some chasm of the rocks and perished.

Don Gaspar found that it was useless endeavouring to quiet the apprehensions of the men or exciting them to any other attempt than that of quitting these fatal shores: he therefore directed that by daybreak all hands should bestir themselves to prepare for their perilous expedition, an order which was joyfully obeyed. In a few days their boat was as thoroughly repaired and made as seaworthy as circumstances admitted: and having filled their empty wine casks from the pools of clear rain water which they found in the cavern, and stowed away as much dried fish, fruit and turtle's eggs as they could carry, they bent their only sail, and, with a light breeze blowing fair, they stood to the westward, and, in a few hours, were out of sight of land.

From a height above their abode did Jacinto,

Inez and father Lopez watch the movements of the crew: the panic which had seized them was so evident that it gave assurance of their not being again molested, and when they beheld the single sail gleaming on the waters, which convinced them that their enemies had abandoned the coast, their joy was complete.

Inez no longer hesitated to comply with the tender entreaties of her lover to become his wife, and the good priest readily bestowed on them the nuptial benediction. Strange and mysterious was the union of two devoted hearts on that solitary shore, where no witnesses of their happiness existed save the birds and flowers, the groves and rocky caves, which in all their wild beauty smiled around.

These three persons were now then the sole denizens of these beautiful and remote islands which promised, in future, to be all their world. Inez and Jacinto feeling as they did towards each other, with every tie subsisting between them which can awaken gratitude or encrease

affection, ceased to look back upon the past and gave their whole souls to the delight of living for each other. All that they desired was that the world beyond should as entirely forget their existence as they abandoned all care of civilized life without a sigh. The society of Father Lopez was a source of real enjoyment to them, his unaffected piety, singular erudition and retentive memory afforded them a great resource and his paternal affection for the children of his adoption, so strangely dependant on him for their happiness, endeared him to them with added force. He constructed for himself a little hermitage in one of the caves, and passed his life in prayer and meditation when not affording assistance to, or entertaining or instructing the youthful pair who were so interesting to him.

That bliss may be, for a time, perfect on this earth, it was for the wedded lovers now to experience, and never was it so exemplified as in their case. Everything around them was in

unison with this sentiment; the skies were bright and cloudless, the voice of melody breathed throughout the perfumed groves and the transparent waters murmuring along the shores, spoke a language of peace and tranquillity—the calm of nature reigned in its most enchanting form, undisturbed by aught save sights and sounds which might well beseem a fairy region. Their days glided on pure and serene as the clime in which they dwelt, where, once the season of storms past, all seems eternal summer. If, occasionally, in the temporary absence of Jacinto on his necessary fishing or shooting excursions, a shade of melancholy would sometimes oppress the heart of Dona Inez when she thought of her father and the strange lot which had consigned her to this silent land of beauty, the return of him she so tenderly loved would soon dispel the transient care which perhaps only served to heighten the enjoyment which had otherwise been too perfect for humanity.

Many months had now elapsed since the departure from the shores of the peaceable islands of the turbulent spirits who disturbed their silent beauty. Inez and Jacinto often spoke of their escape on that terrible night as of a fearful dream, and as they gazed around on the rugged rocks and caverns which guarded the coast, they felt a security to which they had long been strangers.

It was now the season of the year when in other lands the gloom of winter awakens regret for the faded beauty of the scenery: here the changes of the seasons were only marked by the renewal of flowers, where fruits had ceased to glow, and the only indications of the waning year were those external signs of lightning and tempest which, sweeping over the wide Atlantic, were wont for a few hours to envelope the Bermudas in the characteristic features of the storm, and deface for a short period the charms of that smiling paradise.

Jacinto had fashioned for himself a light

canoe from the ever durable cedar, and was able in it to pursue his morning's amusement and occupation of fishing in the small secluded bays along the sound, while his Inez remained in her fairy bower.

This was one morning the case, and she was busied and intent upon the progress of a net which she wove from the fibres of the cocoa nut. She sat beneath the natural arch of a rock which formed the entrance to a beautiful grotto, the walls and roof of which glittered with pendant stalactities of snowy hue. The outside of the cave was overgrown with flowering creepers of every possible combination of form and colour, and the graceful branches of the tree called *the pride of India*, mingled their delicate foliage with the broad palmetto's shadowy leaf. A narrow alley bordered thickly with high bananas, formed an agreeable vista, terminating in the wide expanse of the blue ocean, which glittered like a lake.

Jacinto had been absent some hours, and Inez at length raised her eyes from her work to note, by the shadow of the rocks, if it were time for her to prepare the mid-day repast. As she looked in the direction of the sea, a momentary idea struck her that she could discern something gleaming on its surface, which resembled a sail; it was however so remote and so imperfectly defined, that she set it down at once as the effect of imagination, perhaps a consequence of the train of thought which she had been pursuing. She therefore rose to occupy herself with the primitive arrangements of their meal, and in a short time the board glowed with the produce of the islands. She now turned again to leave the cave in search of Jacinto, when her eye was again arrested by a repetition of what she had before seen, but this time it was more distinct; indeed so much so that she could no longer doubt its reality. She paused a moment in great agitation, a thousand conflicting ideas

rushing at once on her brain. What might this vessel signify? It might be a friendly messenger—coming fraught with hope and temptation, capable of bearing them from their peaceful retreat into the world again—would Jacinto fail or shrink from it? Had he so shut out the existence beyond, renounced for her sake all his former plans and schemes, abandoned the idea of obtaining fame and fortune, that he would let the sail pass on, and leave them both amongst their fruits and flowers, and the silent scenes of this beautiful nature? Or would he seize the opportunity of returning to civilized life—an opportunity which might never again occur? She did not question her own heart, for she depended entirely on the wishes of her husbands, and she asked for nothing but that which he desired. With these floating ideas in her mind she rapidly pursued the path which led to the shore where she expected to find Jacinto. With more than usual delight she hailed his little

skiff, as he obeyed her signal from the beach; and in a few minutes she had clasped him in her arms, and told him what she had just witnessed.

Jacinto hastened with her to their dwelling, and gazing in the direction to which she pointed he plainly distinguished a gallant bark, which, sailing along the shore, was apparently examining the coast, as if seeking some convenient spot to run in and anchor. They watched her progress attentively: on a sudden she seemed to alter her course, and, standing directly parellel with the island, they lost sight of her behind a high projecting promontory.

The lovers looked at each other with sensations to which they dared give no name; but in their hearts fear predominated. The day, however, wore on and the vessel appeared no more, evening approached and by degrees they felt assured that the stranger was now far distant.

The sun was sinking with a ruddy glow

beneath the wave, and Jacinto and Inez silently watched its beams as, seated on a rock on the shore, they enjoyed the magnificent spectacle presented to their sight. They talked of their present happiness and both rejoiced that no interruption had occurred in the landing of strangers to break the quiet of their charmed lives.

"Ours is a strange fate, dear Inez," said Jacinto, "how many summer years shall we pass in this blissful solitude, which realises all the dreams of the Mahomedan heaven save that our being all in all to each other makes our Paradise more complete! Forgotten alike by friends and foes we may here exist like the birds and trees around us till nature's gradual decay bids us cease to breathe and love. Surely, beloved one, we shall die together—for one to exist alone would be indeed a misfortune!"

Inez only replied by a burst of tears for her heart was full, and the unusual excitement of

the morning had overpowered her nerves. Jacinto clasped her to his breast reproaching himself for the words which had awakened her feelings, when a sudden shrill cry echoed along the coast and caused them to start in amazement.

Before they had time to recover from the effect of this sound, and scarcely had they turned in the direction from whence it proceeded, when they beheld hurrying along the beach, and in sight of them a party of men of menacing appearance. To fly was impossible —the party were within a few yards of them, and as Jacinto shrouded the trembling form of his wife in his arms he heard a loud harsh voice exclaim in stern accents.

"Yield traitor and deserter—he whom thou would'st have murdered returns to claim the forfeit of crime!"

He recognized but too well the features of Don Gaspar de Morales in the leader of the band, who rushed forward and commanded his men to seize on Jacinto.

Inez clung to her husband with the energy of despair.

"Hence, miscreant!" he exclaimed. "I yield not to such as thou art—the oppressor of innocence and the deserter of his friend."

So saying he drew his cutlass and still holding Inez in his grasp prepared to defend himself against odds; but with a sinister smile Don Gaspar raised his hand as a signal to his followers, several muskets were instantly raised and fired, and Jacinto fell heavily to the earth pierced through the heart. He uttered no cry —it was the wild shriek of Inez, which rung through the caves and along the rocky shore, awoke the good recluse from contemplation, as he knelt before the rude cross his hands had raised in his retired cell, and thrilled even the hearts of the murderous band who stood above their victims.

Don Gaspar approached, stooped down, and raised the fallen body of Inez; he turned over contemptuously that of her bleeding husband, he looked in his face with a smile of triumph,

and from his pallid corse to the form of her who moved not in his arms. In vain he watched for returning animation, in vain he uttered execrations and blasphemies—*both were dead*, and his victim had escaped him.

At that instant a hollow roar sounded along the sea, one of the men pointed to the vessel which had fired a signal of departure—terrified at the possible recurrence of scenes which they still believed to be super-human, now that the coast had been recognised, the crew clamoured to be gone refusing to remain in the islands. Don Gaspar was compelled to submit, and re-entering their boat the murderous band who had left death and desolation in their track, returned to their comrades on board to relate their adventure with jests and exultation.

Father Lopez, guided by the fearful cry which had startled him in his retreat, hurried to the beach, where the bodies of those with whom he had parted a few hours before, full of life and joy, lay stretched lifeless upon the

sand. With many a tear he dug them a grave close to the bower where they had spent so many happy hours, and placing them side by side he covered them with a mantle of earth strewn with flowers, where they slept calmly together their last sleep of death.

That night the demons of the storm came winged with vengeance above the now dreary islands—trees were torn up by the roots, rocks were shivered and hurled into the air—the sea ran in foamy mountains, dashing over the rugged cliffs; and sounds, as of wailing and lamenting, were borne on the rushing blast, that penetrated through the dark caverns and howled along the precipices. The priest knelt before his cross and heard the desperate struggle of the elements without his cave: when morning dawned he ventured forth, and tremblingly visited the little spot of earth where he had deposited the bodies of the lovers. The sun was shining brightly on the mound—all there was silent, calm, and pure—a changeable rose

had just blown, and its glowing, starlike flowers were shining at the entrance of the grotto beside which the grave was made; two small ground doves were feeding beneath it, whose soft, clear eyes seemed gazing with pity on the approaching friend of those beneath. A large branch of passion flowers had detached itself from the supporting arch and lay in a garland on the ground—a gentle breeze rustled among the leaves of the surrounding bananas, and the glittering dews rested heavily upon the crowding flowers which seemed to start to life and luxuriance as he gazed.

Father Lopez had from that time no other occupation than that of tending the grave of Jacinto and Inez and saying prayers for the repose of their souls. If, in after days, the cross and some rude symbols of the faith which sustained him in so many trials were discovered in these solitary regions, they were looked upon with the more awe as no trace of human habitation could anywhere be seen, and nothing to

tell that three beings had lived and perished there.

It was late in the month of December that a vessel returning from Europe to the coast of Mexico fell in with a shapeless hulk shattered and dismasted, which drifted above the ocean like a burden she was unwilling to swallow, and seemed as if rejected by every element.

A boat's crew boarded her and found the emaciated bodies of two miserable objects, one of whom was dead and the other in the last stage of existence prolonged in spite of famine. The dead man was one of the murderous associates of Don Gaspar: the living one was himself.

He was taken on board the vessel, and for a brief space restored to animation. From his confused exclamations and wild ravings a part of his dismal story could be gathered, but he shortly after expired in the agonies of despair and impenitence, bequeathing with his last breath a curse upon the fatal shores of the lonely Bermudas."

CHAPTER XVII.

See here cool springs, Lycoris, meads and groves,
Here I could melt all life away with thee.

VIRGIL.

MONTH after month glided away of the summer life of Gabrielle and Bernard, and no cloud seemed to come between them and their happiness. They were all-in-all to each other, and loved to recal the similarity which existed between their position and that of the Spanish lovers.

"But how much happier are we than they, or than the fair Urraca and her royal lover," said Gabrielle tenderly, "for their happiness was brief as it was bright—there were relatives

or subjects to object to and annoy their repose while we are independent of the world—no one can come forward to reprove us—we are accountable to no created creature, and it seems as if our life were to be as blissful and serene as the season which we have passed in this lovely valley—the peasants tell me there has seldom been so fine a summer, with fewer storms than usual, and the rain, which is sometimes too frequent here, has only been enough to add beauty to the scene. Are we not fortunate creatures, dear Bernard, how grateful we should be to Heaven, for I think if there was ever perfect enjoyment on earth, it must be that which has fallen to our share."

Gabrielle would frequently indulge in exclamations like these, and her husband entered fully into all her feelings.

"Let us always talk, my beloved, of the present," he would say—"with the past or the future we have nothing to do. You have no recollections but those filled with purity and

goodness, but a shade of sorrow might come over even you, were you to look back."

"Nay"—replied she, playfully, "there are memories I should be sorry to banish, I recur to them frequently, and they are as dear to me as the hour which is flying. I think of that sweet evening when you first came to our village —I remember the first time I beheld you, and I often wonder how it happened that we seemed to understand each other's minds at once. I have heard of the passionate declarations of lovers of their hopes and fears and agitations, and they seem to me a fable; for I felt the instant I gazed on you that you were my friend; I felt as if we had met a thousand times before, and had but lately parted. Your voice seemed but the echo to one which was familiar to my ear and heart, and when you left us I felt certain you would return."

"You but describe my feelings towards you," said Bernard, but he spoke with a sigh—"yet I was a stranger; you knew me not; your con-

fiding and generous mother trusted me without reason—she would have given you to me—alas! should I have accepted the treasure had she lived!"

As he spoke he fell into a reverie which appeared entirely to absorb him—"Why doubt it—dearest husband!" said Gabrielle anxiously.

Bernard started, passed his hand across his brow, and, as if with an effort, smiled.

"Why are you sad, my beloved," cried Gabrielle with tender anxiety, "in spite of all you say I am continually recurring to the past and I see it always makes you pensive."

"No," said Bernard, "it is not that, but the time is nearly at hand when I must think of leaving you for a brief period: we have been here long, and my tenants must be applied to for their rents again."

"How unfortunate!" said Gabrielle, "why, dear Bernard, do you not sell this estate and let us part no more. When you are away I cannot tell you what fears beset me—it was bad

enough in our village, but there I had more occupation and neighbours—here I shall be so lonely, so dreary—oh, do not go—do not leave me!" and she threw herself into his arms in tears.

"My Gabrielle," said he, as he strained her to his bosom, "you must conquer this weakness—my absence need not be for more than two days—I have not far to go now, and I promise you to do as you desire this time. I will arrange everything so that I never need be again obliged to leave you. We shall then never separate, and can go together where we please. But do not weep—I will delay as long as possible—only you must not keep me," he added smiling, "till the season of the wolves, or there may indeed be some danger to dread."

Quieted and relieved, the timid young wife felt her heart reassured by this promise, and there was nothing more said of the intended journey by Bernard, who continued his employment of sketching the beautiful scenery round,

and giving lessons to his willing and apt pupil, who had made rapid progress in the art she admired so much. One delicious morning they had climbed to the extreme height of one of the heighest mountains of the Monts Dores, the magnificent Pic de Sancy.

As far as the eye can reach, from this elevation, it embraces scenery the most beautiful and grand that nature can present. Far off rise the picturesque groups of the Cantal range, the undulating line of their summits faintly traced against the sky. Some stragglers of the Alps raise their snow-crowned heads amidst the clouds, from which it is difficult to distinguish them at that great distance; a blue vapour connects the descending canopy of the sky with the remote landscape, while nearer all Auvergne is spread out at the foot of the giant mountain. The stupendous forms of the circular-headed Mont Domes join the rugged peaks of the Monts Dores.

The enchanted region of La Limagne with

all its pastures and its broad expanse of lava, covered with luxuriant vegetation, spreads abroad like an enormous lake studded with green islands crowded with all the riches of nature.

Silver streams run shining in the plains, and dashing cataracts foam over red masses of basaltic rock, leaping and rushing till they subside in the bosom of the tranquil waters that receive them. Flocks and herds are feeding on the flowery sides of the steep,—yawning ravines break the placid aspect of the verdant expanse, and rugged piles of huge stones raise their high pyramids, the image of desolation amidst plenty.

Hamlets, villages, and the huts of cow-keepers are scattered over the hills and in the villages—yet so great is the height that no sound reaches the spot where the traveller stands to contemplate this varied scene, and as the wedded lovers looked around on all sides, their minds were too full for words.

At length Bernard turned his head to gaze in another direction and discover new beauties when he started to observe that, standing not far from them, on the plateau of the mountain, a stranger was occupied in contemplating the scene, apparently as much absorbed in admiration as themselves.

The first movement of Bernard on perceiving him was an agitated anxiety to remove from the spot.

"Can we never be at peace!" he exclaimed, "even here, in these wild glens, where one would imagine no intruder could come, our privacy must be disturbed by the inquisitive and idle! Let us go home, Gabrielle."

"Nay," replied Gabrielle, smiling, "you are unjust, dear Bernard—this is no mere idler; I have seen him several times, and once when you were away from the cottage he asked his way of me: he appears a student and is always occupied, seeking for plants amongst the rocks.

Look, he is so busy that he actually does not seem to see us."

At this moment the stranger, evidently absorbed in the contemplation of some specimen of rock plants, which he had discovered, passed nearly close to them, and it was only on suddenly looking up that he appeared aware of their vicinity.

He immediately apologised, for having interrupted them, in so courteous and simple a manner, that Bernard was propitiated, and it was not long before they entered into a conversation and found their new acquaintance a well-informed and agreeable person.

He told them that he was a medical man, travelling, during a short interval, which he was able to steal from his practise in Paris, and indulging in the pursuit of botanical studies to which he was much attached. He seemed greatly interested in the young couple, and, having an accurate judgment, highly appreciated the performance of Bernard. He encou-

raged him in his art, and recommended his carrying his talent to the capital when he had exercised it some little time longer; he offered to give any assistance in his power to the young artist, who on his side promised at a future period to claim his protection and interest. He lingered some weeks in the neighbourhood, during which he frequently paid visits to Bernard's humble cottage, and though in general averse to admit any one, the latter could not but allow that the brief sojourn of the physician Fagon, was a pleasing episode in their recluse life. Gabrielle regretted his departure; but, although he evidently liked him, Bernard seemed almost relieved when he quitted the country, so fond was he of the exclusive society of his beloved Gabrielle.

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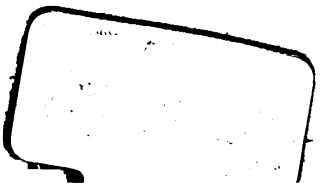
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